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ANCIENT WORLD**

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EDITED BY JOHN WILKINS
AND ROBIN NADEAU



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20.3	Sketch of a water heater.

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Abbreviations

AE

1888–. *Année épigraphique*.

Amyx

Amyx, D.A. 1988. *Corinthian Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period*. Oxford.

ARV

Beazley, H.D. 1963. *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*. Oxford.

CIL

Mommsen, T., Hirschfeld, O., Domaszewski, A., ed. 1893–1955. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. 2nd edn. Berlin.

CMG

1908–. *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*. Leipzig.

FGrH

Jacoby, F. 1923–58. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin.

FHG

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IG IV²

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ILS

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IOLB

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KA

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LIMC

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MAMA

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OGIS

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PMG

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RE

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Introduction

John Wilkins and Robin Nadeau

This is a book about antiquity, but not as conventionally defined. We extend the survey to include Byzantium, Islam, the Middle Ages, and China, as we will go on to explain. The book also belongs to the nascent discipline of Food Studies, which is establishing itself through such bodies as the Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation, based in Tours, France, and its associated journal *Food and History*, the Centre for Food Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and in a range of journals and publications, among them *Petits Propos Culinaires*, *Food Culture and Society* and Scholliers & Clafin (2012), which gives a bibliographical overview of the subject.

A French contribution to food studies will surprise few, nor the declaration by UNESCO of the French meal as part of immaterial world heritage. In an attempt to locate Greek and Roman food, the editors debate robustly in the following chapter the notion of a 'great food culture'. Is the food of the ancients important because it is old and foundational in certain senses? Is it also gastronomic (a term apparently coined by Athenaeus of Naucratis in the second/third century AD)? Here we are talking about how another culture, such as Greek or Chinese, is important to *us*: that is, the reception of that culture as influential in other cultures. Few people expect to find a British restaurant when they travel internationally, but many will find a French or Italian restaurant. Many factors may determine this phenomenon, but the production and serving of the food is undoubtedly one of them.

The study of food and drink within the disciplines of Classics and Ancient History has developed strongly in the past four decades, from a number of perspectives. In anthropology, Detienne & Vernant (1989 [1st French edn 1979]) have been most influential. On the history of the symposium Murray (1990a) and Murray & Tecuşan (1995) made enormous strides, while on food and dining Slater (1991) and Wilkins, Harvey & Dobson (1995) tried to give different approaches to the subject. For Greece and for Rome Dalby (1996, 2000b) approached social history from a text and lexical perspective. Commensality has been powerfully treated by Schmitt Pantel (1992 [2nd edn 2011]) and Donahue (2004b), and table manners by Nadeau (2010a). Much work has been done on agriculture (including Forbes & Foxhall (1982); see Kron in this volume). The supply of grain is treated by Garnsey (1988), Erdkamp (2005), Oliver (2007), and Moreno (2007). Archeology has made major advances (Pitts and Robinson & Rowan in this volume), in particular on the ancient Aegean meal rituals (Halstead & Barrett, 2004a; Mee & Renard, 2007; Hitchcock, Laffineur & Crowley (2008). Food in literature has been

studied by Gowers (1993), Wilkins (2000a) and De Ornellas e Castro (2011), while discourses of luxury and desire are eloquently explored by Davidson (1997). A general overview may be seen in the work of Garnsey (1999) and Wilkins & Hill (2006).

The chapters that follow set out to give an overview of the topic, and then to add something important to the author, whether a particular example, a particular argument, or an unfamiliar new direction. We have tried to move somewhat beyond the current state of knowledge. Needless to say we do not cover all periods from the Bronze Age to the end of the Middle Ages, nor do we cover all regions. Such a geographical coverage may be found in the work of Horden & Purcell (2000). We have little, for example, on Babylon or Persia, important ancient cultures included for example in the work of Wilkins, Harvey & Dobson (1995). We do discuss Roman Britain but have little on the influential provinces of North Africa or southern Gaul, on which much important work has been done. Geographically speaking, we have approached the matter in a different way. In attempting to escape from the standard problems of center and periphery in the Greco-Roman world, of Athens and Rome as powerful but atypical examples of centers of food consumption and of book production (and thereby of historical records), we have concentrated a section on Asia Minor and the Black Sea, drawing on a region that was peripheral and partly ‘not-Greek’ in the fifth century BC, but much more securely bound within the classical world by the time of Augustus, not least since Rome’s acquisition of the province of Asia in 133 BC was the latest in the surges of foreign wealth into Rome, which moralizing sources saw as the corruption of their ancient way of life, tempting them away from their diet of bacon, turnips and spelt porridge. Braund and Mitchell combine geographical awareness and textual analysis with archeology and epigraphy, greatly expanding what the texts want to tell us. Mitchell, too, covers a broad time period, identifying a stronger Greek influence on food in Asia Minor than Rome was to produce. His wide time frame also takes him up to very late antiquity, leading nicely to Caseau’s chapter on Byzantium, which itself provides a rich balance to Laurioux’s chapter on the mediaeval West.

Though we have chapters on archeology and anthropology, texts remain important, as do ideas of identity and commensality that help to place the foods in the cultures. Sharing in sacrifice helps to strengthen group bonds, as does the subsequent commensality, with the final symposium and entertainments of the *convivium* introducing philosophy, poetry, and entertainment.

This volume tries to encounter all phases of food eating: production, distribution, preparation, and consumption, and technologies related to them. Our main focus is on the cultural aspects related to food, but one cannot deny the role played by nature in the process of food choices (Horden & Purcell, 2000). Food studies is far from being simple and one dimensional, but it is the

purpose of a book such as this to generalize where extended comments are strictly needed to make numerous distinctions between time periods, age, sexual and social groups, even cities and regions. This is the purpose of notes and reading suggestions. In fact, people tend to associate limited types of food and custom with precise social groups and cultures, but it is never really this simple in reality. Food consumption is not a static cultural component but part of a constant negotiation between the past, innovation, and foreign influences (Dietler, 2007, 224).

The distribution of the chapters can be somewhat deceptive, but it is our claim that food cultures were more porous than it appears. Studies on cross-cultural exchanges are blossoming. If foreign influences such as the introduction of the dining couch in ancient Greece are more widely known (Dentzer, 1982) in food studies, cultural exchanges in ancient societies need to be considered on a bigger scale (Broekaert, Nadeau & Wilkins, 2015). Indeed, the exchange of goods (ingredients and tableware) and information (recipes and techniques) is a natural cultural phenomenon from the beginning of humankind. Even the food culture of China borrowed ingredients from outside throughout its history (Chang, 1977b, 7).

In booksellers today, we find many more books on food and eating than the ancients ever imagined. Does this matter? Is this just a trend? It is more than that, since we can trace cookery literature way back to the fifth/fourth century BC on the testimony of Plato. Are these books a manifestation of a real “prise de conscience” of the importance of choosing food and of its preparation? Or could it be just another way for bourgeois people to display their wealth and create behaviors which discriminate social classes? One could argue that, after the industrialization of food production, people became more critical of the achievements of modern science and modern production processes and its impact on the human body. However, industrialization of food production must be considered in its historical context of optimism followed by critiques of modernization. In the 20th century, mass production was the answer to the food crisis after the Second World War. It was an era of great industrial optimism. Today, that euphoria is coming to an end. “Real” food that tastes better is the new motto of the Western World (Waters, 2007). This new way of understanding food comes from a new way of apprehending the world, more critical about the outcomes of development through Western models, even if we can find traces in earlier periods of gourmets who favored tastes of fresh and ripe food items (Archestratus of Gela (fourth century BC), Nicolas de Bonnefons (seventeenth century AD)). We have to remind ourselves that some people in many cultures pleaded in favor of artificial and modified flavors, blending them to create something new. Ancient Rome and the medieval kingdoms are good examples (Montanari, 2010, 68–9). Taste must be understood as part of the perception process of the self and of the group (Bourdieu, 1986).

Food reflects a culture perfectly, as in a mirror; food gives access to the human mind, and to its social and cultural constructions. Tastes and food preferences are socially constructed. Since food selection, cuisine, and eating behaviors are so closely linked with society, economy, and culture, food becomes a privileged object to allow access to ancient cultures and thoughts. However, food should not be taken in evolutionary terms, except perhaps when technical discoveries such as razor technology or pottery (for cooking and conservation) made a huge impact on food preparation and human diet. Each society is equally complex in social terms and, in the same way, the relation between food and society assumes the same importance in all of them.

Food choice is a way to express self and/or group identity. Such choices can be prescribed, within a scientific discourse, in a philosophical and religious tradition, but also through the channel of pleasure. Choosing food then involves showing affiliation. The scientific discourse has its own language and principles: humor, balance, and digestion in antiquity, calories, fat, carbohydrates, proteins, and vitamins today. In both, then and now, moral constraints and self-demeanor are promoted through leading Western philosophical and religious traditions, as also within medical discourse. Epicureanism is an old school of thought from ancient Greece that also finds its followers today (Scade in this volume). In fact, each culture, each social class, comes up with its range of selection criteria: concerns such as taste, origins, and purity are equally important in Rome for example (see Galen *On the Powers of Foods*, Powell, 2003). Differences may lie in reasons used to explain such choices, reasons in line with a precise social and historical context. For example, in an urban setting such as the city of Rome, pollution was already a concern (Galen *On the Powers*).

Eating lies at the intersection of biology, society, and culture. While it is true that the environment provides food for the local population (see Harris, 1985), food that is good to eat is also food that is good to think with, as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss observed (1962). Humans do not simply eat what is available to them. Tastes and distastes are created by culture. Many potential foodstuffs surrounding us are frowned upon, since culture and social expectations play a big role in food selection. A good example is perhaps modern Britain. As an island surrounded by great fishing potential, one would expect that fish and seafood would play a large role in local British cuisine. But this is not the case. Squid abounds off the north Scottish coast, but is rarely found on Scottish plates. Most of the production of fish and seafood is sent to foreign markets. Instead, meat plays symbolically and economically a much bigger role in Britain's plates, for cultural, economic, and historical reasons. Another example concerns buffalos in the American Mid-West of the nineteenth century. White settlers replaced buffalos with herds of cattle. Even though beef became then commonly available to Native

Americans, beef was often ignored by them since it had no social and religious place within their thought system (Wilkins, 2000b, 214, from Douglas, 1987). Care is therefore needed when studying food in any given society. On the one hand, food selection is greatly influenced by the availability of local products, but its incorporation into the people's diet is not automatic (de Garine, 1979). On the other hand, locally produced food had to be introduced into collective belief systems to be socially acceptable, since food is an ideal medium of self or social-projection (Bourdieu, 1986; Corbeau & Poulain, 2002, 69–70, 110; Erdkamp, 2012b, 5). We have access to little objective description of reality to aid our understanding of ancient food cultures. For instance, food is highly symbolic in epic poetry and, if it gives an idea of some eating norms, it is representative only in part of reality. One of the most reliable sources comes from the doctor Galen, in *On the Powers of Foods* from the late second century AD. He makes a clear distinction between what is simply edible and what is more socially acceptable (see Leigh and Wilkins in this volume).

Nonetheless, the environment must be taken into consideration, since noticeable differences can be observed between mountain sites and plains, coastal and deep forest surroundings. The Phoenicians lived mainly in cities and had an economy based on trading, while the Greeks, living in mountains and plains as well as cities, are known as farmers and breeders. This reality is also conveyed in their belief system: the Greeks worshipped gods such as Demeter, Dionysos, Poseidon, and Heracles for cereals, wine, fish and meat (Lucian, *Icar*. 27). The Celts shared a lifestyle and a set of beliefs oriented towards the forest: hunting, gathering, and pastoralism. It comes as no surprise that food privileged in Christian literature is associated with the Mediterranean regions where it was developed: bread, wine, and olive oil. However, in publications such as this, it is difficult to take into consideration at length differences over time, or variations between different cities or regions, regular intakes of food and feasts, even differences between rich and poor. We have to admit that it is often difficult – even hazardous – to focus on chronology in antiquity, since we only have access to partial sources of information, scattered over space and time in a very uneven and more or less unpredictable fashion. We would also like to remind our readers that cultural and administrative boundaries are quite elusive and permeable over time.

One distinctive habit of the human race is to eat food together as meals; this makes eating a highly structured and ritualized social activity, with symbolic components. Many studies in anthropology, the social sciences, and, more recently, history, acknowledge the central social role played by food (Becker, 2012). To be fair, the study of food in ancient societies has a long history, but mainly within an antiquarian perspective (Lombardo, 1995, 256–7). Food was a category of knowledge in ancient times, even more evidently amongst intellectuals of Hellenistic and Imperial times. It was a great source of

inspiration for ‘encyclopedists’ such as Pliny the Elder and Athenaeus of Naucratis (see Murray and Nadeau (*Cookery Books*) in this volume). Food and belles-lettres came together again in the works of enthusiasts such as Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin in the early nineteenth century. In continuation with this tradition of food as knowledge, our volume follows current trends in ancient food studies, developed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which consider food and eating behaviors as a central social, but also cultural, economic, and political, component of society. Adopting a more holistic view of ancient food studies is a good thing to our mind. If our ambition is to reach for a global understanding of food and society in the ancient classical world, broadly understood, readers may feel dissatisfied by a lack of detail from time to time.

However, food studies in ancient times are at a crossing point. New techniques such as bioarcheology, archeobotany, and zooarcheology allow us to compare remains with ideologically based texts on which food studies in ancient times have been mainly based until now. However, if archeology helps us to have a more quantitative approach to ancient food, literature remains the best way to a qualitative evaluation (Halstead & Isaakidou, 2004; see Robinson & Rowan and Pitts in this volume). Since the same ingredients can be used for basic and luxury dishes, traces of the foodstuffs are not enough to reconstruct the social meaning and use of any ingredients. For instance, in Athenaeus, we learn that snow/ice is a refreshing luxury good in Greece and Rome, but difficult to obtain and to preserve in most regions. It is unnecessary to point out that traces of ice cannot be found *in situ*, but texts and containers can. An interpretation based solely on literature can lead the way to misconceptions too. For instance, Nadeau (2015a) recently argued that the general opinion on the introduction of chicken in Greece was misled by text-based analysis only. Indeed, the modern scholar must not rely on a single source of information to have a clear view of the *realia*. Although some foodstuffs can be found and analyzed today in archeological records, the whole span of ingredients used by the ancients cannot be uncovered, since some can more easily be conserved and others will quickly perish. It is also often difficult to assess how these ingredients were used, what the recipes were, what the proportions were, which dishes were privileged by some social categories but unreachable or untouchable for other social groups (age group, gender group, ethnic group, and so on). Were these recovered ingredients used for a single feast or over a long period of time? Are they representative of the consumption of a single type of individual or an entire community? It is also very difficult to reconstruct the structure or the sequence of daily food intake from the ingredients. As argued by Mary Douglas, one meal or one food intake must be analyzed in relation with all other meals and food intakes (Douglas, 1971).

The evidence of jugs, cups, and other tableware, sometimes found in graves

and projecting high social status, suggests that food consumption, and most probably the social gatherings of people eating together, is a way to display wealth, social, and political status. It is both an expression of a social class claiming preeminence and a way to distinguish individuals from others of lower rank. Eating together and food selection can designate both horizontal integration and vertical differentiation (Halstead & Barrett, 2004b, 3). Archeologists can even see evidence of competitive feasting, of wealthy prominent individuals who acquire sympathy and political predominance by offering feasts to the community. Such sites for large-scale feasting in Cretan and Mycenaean societies have been proposed by Bendall (2004). However, food studies in prehistoric and ancient societies remain a speculative field.

Humans are omnivorous. It is well known that the first human societies were nomadic groups of hunter-gatherers that migrated following food resources. Although meat seems to have had a great symbolic and social importance for them, most of the nutritional intake probably came from plants (Perlès, 1996, 31). In the Middle Paleolithic (200 000–40 000 BCE), *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* efficiently hunted big mammals with sophisticated techniques, while beating techniques and fishing became a common activity in the Recent Paleolithic (40 000–10 000), with hooks and harpoons. Grand-scale successful hunts led to the need for food conservation: drying, smoking, and freezing techniques (in winter). A hunter-gatherer society is characterized by periods of feasting around hugely successful hunts to make reserves in body fat and periods of unsuccessful hunts and lack of food. The relation between plenty and scarcity is integrated in human activities and in mental and social representations of them from those times onward.

As presented in a recent study, cooking, made possible by the domestication of fire, between 700 000 and 400 000 years ago, made us human. Cooking allowed the consumption of new products that were difficult to digest, even some that were previously toxic. The biggest benefit was an easier assimilation of nutrients into the body that liberated energy normally used for digestion for the development of the human brain (Wrangham, 2009). Greek and Roman doctors from Hippocrates to Galen considered cooking food as part of the digestive process. Fire makes an important marker between nature and culture. It is the starting point of cuisine and cooking techniques. It is no coincidence that the ancient Greeks considered fire as a powerful gift from the titan Prometheus, who stole it from the gods and gave it to humans. However, as a result, humans were punished and had, from that time forward, to prepare and cook their own meals (Hesiod, *Theog.* 511–70; Vernant, 1989). Aristotle states that grilled meat came before boiled meat and reflects on reasons why some vegetables are boiled and others grilled (Pr. 20. 923a17-29; Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F 173; Var. *L* 5.109). This makes sense in the evolution of the human species, since meat grilled on spits is likely to have been in fashion

long before the invention of clay and cooking pots. Still, many cultures came up with other ways to cook meat: boiling techniques, where heated rocks were put into a container made of wood or leather; *à l'étouffé* in a hole dug in the ground covered afterwards; or meat cooked in a paunch or in a pelt and so on. Some scholars claimed that the anteriority of grilled meat is proved in ancient Greece by the fact that Homer describes only grilled meat (Reinach, 1996, 563 [first publ. 1923]). However, we should not take this as an empirical description of reality, but rather as a symbolic presentation of sacrificial meat in a highly idealized society. This symbolic distinction also played a major part in Lévi-Strauss's studies on the distinction between the raw and the cooked (1963).

All agree in considering the “invention of agriculture” – which, one would assume, was not invented overnight but implied a long process of discoveries, selection of species, elaboration of techniques, and modification of lifestyle – as a major event that modified the way people ate, in agriculturally based societies at least. The Neolithic saw a modification of the entire fiber of society, since social and political structure is closely linked with the environment and the production system. Behind the domestication of plants and animals lies the desire to control production and supplies more efficiently, but, in reality, this economic specialization is also characterized by dependence on fewer foodstuffs. Around 10 000, agrarian societies emerged in the Fertile Crescent, in the Near and Middle East; domestication of plants and animals also took place independently in many cultures between 10 000 and 5000 BCE (Gebauer & Douglas Price, 1992; Perlès, 1996, 42–3; Miller & Wetterstrom, 2000, 1124–6). Specific crops were selected and became central to groups of cultures: wheat in the Mediterranean, sorghum and millet in Africa, rice in Eastern Asia, and maize corn and beans in America. Social, economic, and religious life revolved around the cycle of seasons and food production: crop plantation and harvest time. Another invention came shortly after the more sedentary way of life associated with agriculture: pottery (c. 7000 BCE). It revolutionized food conservation and cooking techniques. This stability favored the expansion of larger communities, with the production of significant surpluses over time, and new methods and techniques for food conservation. Larger communities developed around the valleys in the Fertile Crescent and the Nile flooded by the rise of the Euphrates, Tigris, and Nile, leaving natural fertilizer behind. Irrigation systems were developed and contributed to better results in some regions. The combination of such favorable conditions facilitated the development of bigger cities and, eventually, regional and supraregional powers. With the appearance of cities, the political control and administration of food supplies became central in the development of kingship and empire (Pollock, 1999).

Sedentary life and agriculture coexisted, but also implied a new understanding of the world. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Enkidu is civilized through eating the

products of agriculture. Such a story places emphasis on the distinctive mindset and customs of pastoral and sedentary ways of life (Erdkamp, 2012b, 1–2). There is a correlation between one’s mind frame and the economic structure of society. In ancient Greece and the Roman world, wealth, power, and citizenship were based on land ownership and land production. The case is well known for classical Athens: landed property was a privilege for citizens. In Rome, treatises were written to educate gentlemen-farmers in how to get the most out of farming. The focus of these treatises was more on mass production and profit than on quality, despite what one might think. If, on the one hand, farmers tried to produce a wide variety of products in their garden that would be consumed within the household and complement their daily diet, vegetables, fruits, eggs, cheese, and so on, big farm owners would on the other focus their energy in mass producing one or some particular products to make a profit (Galen *On the Powers* 1.13). They could, or course, trade some of their surpluses against other needed goods or sell them. Stocked surpluses could be used to speculate on the price of grain (mainly). Large producers tried to sell their crops, kept in their private granaries, when the prices in the markets were at the highest. Many denounced speculation with food, since, in a way, the wealthy made bigger profits when the mass went hungry and the prices were high (Nadeau, 2009). We have to bear in mind that harvest failures appear to be quite frequent in preindustrial societies and that the great majority of farmers possessed only a modest estate to rely upon (Gallant, 1991; Garnsey, 1999). Therefore, small farm owners were vulnerable to bad harvest and natural and political catastrophes out of their control. Common sense implied that a person had to store and make reserves in anticipation of bad crops and drought (Hesiod *Op.* 298–319). Thus, for ancient Greece for instance, undernourishment seems to be ubiquitous for the majority of the population (Galen *On the Powers*; Garnsey, 1999; see Hunter & Koukouzika in this volume). The prestige associated with land owning remained central in Western thought until perhaps very recently. It is central in the representation of the universe (religious beliefs and myths) and in the social and political structure of an agrarian society. In these, cultivating cereals is considered a sign of culture, opposed to pastoralism (Vidal-Naquet, 1986, 18–21). A paradoxical outcome was that hunting and horse riding became an activity commonly associated with the leisure class. Cereals were the main staple of the ancient diet; entire economies were based around its production, hence its symbolic and nutritive importance.

Husbandry is a major part of ancient economies too; some are almost exclusively based on it. Owning animals can be a sign of wealth. In classical Athens, the higher social groups are divided between those who own horses and those who own plough oxen. This is why farm animals are central in our documentation: in epic poetry, Homer’s heroes organized raids to steal them. Cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs also provide work power, wool, and milk, and even provide a food supplement in meat from time to time. Farm animals are

an investment. No wonder it is such a big deal in literature when one or many are butchered and eaten. Eating meat is a sign of prestige. It is the main reason why Greek heroes at Troy ate meat: it symbolizes their social status and piety through blood-sacrifice (*thusia*). In fact, meat is such a big deal symbolically that farm animals have a big role in myths, religious beliefs, and social/religious rituals, even though it is only a small part of everyday food intake (Nadeau, 2012b, 97–9).

Killing an animal and cooking and sharing meat is a mystic experience, a confirmation of world order and life cycles. Sharing meat and eating it implies common shared beliefs between the providers and the eaters. In normal communities, killing a large animal often implies collaboration (between hunters in societies based on hunting) and, even more interestingly socially, a distribution of the meat, which creates and symbolizes the political and social structure within the community, between families, sexes and age groups, social statuses, and so on. The selection of the type of animal is symbolically important, but so are the cooking techniques used. The distinction between cooked food and raw meat delimits symbolically human groups and, more broadly, the civilized and the uncivilized (Detienne, 1979a, 88; Schmitt Pantel in this volume). Therefore, if not sacrificed properly, the edible becomes inedible (Vidal-Naquet, 1986, 23–4, 27). People sacrifice what will please the gods, which almost always equates to what they produce and what they eat. This will preserve the cosmic order in their mind.

Cuisine is a cultural marker, but we tend to overestimate the unity of a culture over all social classes, as Jack Goody reminds us (1982, 27). The physician Galen (*On the Powers*) gives a good example of this. If rich people can rely on luxury and foreign foodstuffs, paupers mostly rely on local products, and, as specified by Galen, often on what is socially considered lesser grades of food. Similarly, in ancient China, although a wide range of foodstuffs are known and can actually be eaten in a period of dearth, only a small proportion of these would be consumed in normal years. If humans choose their foods mostly for their symbolic significance, they can also, in times of crisis, be taken as mere fuel, for sustenance and survival (Collin Bouffier & Sauner, 2006). People were aware of all the basic techniques to preserve food. Survival also implied that commoners adopt a frugal diet in anticipation of shortage and that the elite show its social, economic, and political superiority through grand eating (Chang, 1977b, 9, 15). Occasional communal feasting could bring them all together in a fashion that would explicitly or through inversion rituals display the social stratigraphy in force. Eating unites and creates distinction.

Antiquity saw the growth of many sects who rejected conventional regimes and social conventions in favor of a remote and abstinent lifestyle. The rejection of social values in favor of more spiritual and abstinent ways of life underlines the fact that food is not only a powerful social marker but also a

“foreign component” that will create wanted and unwanted effects on the body and on the psyche. Medieval doctors and philosophers, following Galen, considered food as a ‘non-natural’, something beyond the ‘natural’ faculties of growth, nourishment, and reproduction, the product of culture (Montanari, 2010, 13, 41, 55–8). In order to create the desired effect, religious, philosophical, and/or medical authorities set out rules and advice on what should be eaten and avoided. What a person eats and drinks send a message to the community on his/her status and beliefs. The body conveys this message.

One tends to choose not only what tastes good, but also what makes one feel good with oneself in the eyes of the community, to a point that can sometimes be conducive to eating disorder. Bulimia and anorexia are well known problems in modern Western societies caused by the tensions between social ideals and self-acceptance. It is a reminder of the life of Christian hermits and saints who could ignore most basic instincts such as eating and procreating in order to access a higher spiritual experience. (See Caseau in this volume.) For centuries, eaters had to find a middle way between ideal/extreme eating behaviors and reality. Although frugality/asceticism became the model for Christians from the end of antiquity onwards, the majority of the population did not have eating disorder caused by extreme fasting. In fact, the vast majority was more preoccupied in getting food to survive than trying to abstain from it. Asceticism is a concern mostly for the wealthy and the extremely devoted.

Alcohol has been an important part of the human diet since primeval times. Besides its social importance, its psychotropic effect and other effects on brain and body, people must have known that it was sometimes a healthier alternative to water infected by harmful microorganisms and parasites. Alcoholic beverages have a nutritional content too (McGovern, 2009). Ethanol is one of the most controversial items in the human diet. Moreover, its consumption was regulated by rules, because of the intoxicating effects. In ancient India, the Dharmasutras forbid its consumption to Brahmins (Gaut. Dh. Su. II.20). If abstinence is a mark of the ethos of privileged classes, its consumption requires political maturity and an ethos that can be acquired only by well educated male citizens in ancient Greece, excluding children, women, and barbarians – that said, some categories can be exonerated, whores and courtesans for instance, since they have no good reputation to protect. It unites and differentiates those who may or may not drink it (Davidson, 1997; Garcia Soler, 2010).

Men and women, children and the elderly, are prescribed different food in accordance with their status. Ancient Greek and Roman physicians for instance discouraged wine drinking for women (Ath. Med. apud Orib. *Inc.* 21, 1–3). Although medical reasons are evoked to explain the “weak nature” of their bodies, social conventions based on moral issues can safely be assumed to be the real motive here. For the same reason, food craving must be

controlled for women (Xen. *Lac.* 1.3; Orib. *Inc.* 18.10). Deprivation symbolizes their social subordination. Moderation and exercises were prescribed to pregnant women by doctors who did not want to see them indulge in their craving for delicate food (Gal. apud Orib. *Inc.* 22.13–5). Food can have magical properties too. In the *Upanisads*, it is believed that the kind of food taken by a pregnant woman, but also when feeding the child after birth, will have an impact on the child (Brhad-aranyaka Upanisad VI.4.13–28; see Galen *On the Powers*) This is not such a crazy notion since we think similarly, with scientific studies to prove it. In Greek and Roman medicine, recommended food will also differ according to the season, the region, and body types (see Wilkins in this volume).

Viniculture was considered a sign of civilization for some, since it implied technical skills and knowledge. According to drinking manners, there are right and wrong ways to drink wine. To follow the rules is a way to show one's identity and/or good education (Lissarrague, 1990; Hartog, 2001, 273–9; Garcia Soler, 2010). Drinking is another example of how it can be difficult to draw the line between social projections and reality through iconography and literary documentation. Wine is praised in such a way in Greek and Roman literature that we may ask ourselves if it is not masking common beverages such as milk and beer (Goupil, 2010; Auberger & Goupil, 2010). It implies a certain number of problems: for Greece and Rome, we have mainly access to description of highly ritualized meals in which wine plays an intricate part: the *symposion* and the *cena*. Other cultures, such as Mesopotamia and Egypt, were well known beer brewers and drinkers. Therefore, we must consider the possibility that Greeks and Romans, in presenting themselves as wine drinkers, did it as in a mirror, describing themselves as the exact opposite of beer drinking cultures. The Israelites presented themselves as wine drinkers (*Gen.* 9:20) in such a way that it was made clear that they did not like beer, unlike the Babylonians, who proudly drank it (Geller, 2004, 237–40; Erdkamp, 2012b, 7). The Mediterranean trilogy of bread, wine, and oil survived the fall of the Roman Empire in Western Europe and Byzantium, not only because the culture of these foodstuffs was deeply rooted in the economics and the diets of the people who lived in the regions previously under Roman control but also because they kept a symbolic image of civilization and Christianity, with its Mediterranean origins (Vidal-Naquet, 1986, 15–38; Montanari, 1999, 166–7; see also Auberger, 2010, 9–13; Auberger & Goupil, 2010).

Many scholars offer a romantic view of classical civilization, which can give the impression that these cultures were better prepared against bad harvests and climatic disasters. However, all aspects taken into consideration, ancient cultures seem to be a typical pre-industrial economy and social structure based on agriculture and pastoralism hugely dependent on the fairness of climatic conditions. A few years of bad harvests can mean social unrest and,

even, the fall of great empires. Local administration, even huge empires, often steps in to plan ways to manage the production, processing, and distribution of food supplies in a way that will ensure social and political stability. The palatial economy offers a centralized controlled economy. Stocking the surpluses and an overview of trading ensured the stability of the economy, but also a redistribution of wealth that will guarantee the steadiness of social and political hierarchies, in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Minoan and Mycenaean Greece, and so on. Writing and keeping records became consequently quite a handy way to manage surpluses and pay workers: officials, scribes, artisans, and construction workers (Erdkamp, 2012b, 8–11). However, the stability of social and political structure also implied the necessity of making sure that the basic needs were covered *ad minimum*.

Unconsciously, the way people think and act is driven by the need for survival. Survival of the household is inscribed in economic, social, religious, and political structures and interactions (Garnsey, 1999; Nadeau, 2009). Producing food required risk management, since crop failure was a common problem: farmers tried to diversify the type of crop and dispersed their plots (Erdkamp, 2012c, 61–4). In case of need, people could rely on lesser types of food (Galen *On the Powers*). For instance, assistance in case of need could be given by allies (horizontal and vertical ties) or, in the case of Rome, by patrons to their clients. It was also customary to lay by reserves in years of good harvest to anticipate drought and harvest failure. In Egypt and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, it was the responsibility of secular and religious authorities (Gen. 41: 33–6). In ancient Greece, an entire community could come together to make sure that their basic needs were covered in times of shortage or harvest failure for instance, in sponsoring a shipment of cereals from abroad or in making local stocks from local sanctuaries available to fellow citizens. Roman authorities even organized (sometimes free) grain distribution and sold a part of their reserves on the local market (Erdkamp, 2005). In cases of large urban areas such as Athens and Rome where the local production did not suffice to meet the needs, foreign food was imported, mainly grain (Moreno, 2007; Oliver, 2007; Bissa, 2009; Broekaert & Zuiderhoek, 2012). But can hardship and a “great food culture” come together?

*

Did the Greeks or Romans produce a “great food culture”? The question seems worth asking in a volume such as this. They had good agricultural production, the Romans especially, a range of cooking techniques, cookery books, courts and centers of wealth and consumption, varied forms of political system. A simple answer might be that the Greeks lived in a terrain too agriculturally poor to produce such a culture, with perhaps exceptions for the Greeks in Asia Minor, the Black Sea and southern Italy and Sicily, as might be argued. And the Romans had sufficient power and wealth, and agricultural

produce supplemented with imported foods, in big city centers, but showed little interest in writing cookery books (as the Greeks had done – modestly – from the fourth century onwards; Olson & Sens, 2000; Wilkins & Hill, 2011).

A case can perhaps be made for the Greeks or the Romans: Andrew Dalby has certainly tried to make the case for Greek gastronomy in a number of publications. Perhaps the answer will be a negative one, that many aspects of ancient classical cultures, such as comedy, tragedy, philosophy, satire, roads, and concrete, not to mention democracy and law, have been passed down to the modern world, and underpin many modern cultures; but food and eating is not one of them – or is it? Romans introduced agricultural techniques described by Cato, Varro, and Columella that were transmitted to the Medieval ages, the Italian “antipasti” (prosciutto and melon) is based on ancient medical principles, Modern Greeks drink retsinê, and so on.

RN: Before coming to an agreement, we have to focus on the definition of the words and concepts we use. S. Mennell argued that cultural distinctions are often arbitrary and often subjective (1985). What is a “great food culture”? Is it the equivalent of what Jack Goody called a “high cuisine”? Goody’s association between the kind of cuisine and the social and political structure of a given society is very helpful; food and society go hand to hand (Goody, 1982). It helps understand why a cuisine seems to be more elaborate in a society and simpler in another one. What is different then? “Great food cultures” have things in common: literature. They have left literary records, even an abundant literature concerning food. Therefore, I wonder: were all great food cultures also the depositary of a literary culture? In my mind, there is no “great food culture” without propaganda, or, said differently, without people chanting the merit of a (often its) cuisine (Pitte, 2010, 12). Would French cuisine be a creation from nineteenth-century authors who created a French identity in the context of developing national identities in Europe? Then, cuisine becomes an art form performed by great artists (or chefs). Food becomes thus noteworthy for the intellectual elite, from which we learn most of our knowledge about past food cultures. Consequently, “civilized” and/or influential individuals identify themselves with it and give it its “lettres de noblesse.” We do have elaborate accounts of ancient foodstuffs and ancient dinners in the work of Pliny the Elder or Athenaeus of Naucratis for instance. But can traditional “street food” sold on the street of cities such as Bangkok – or ancient Pompeii – be signs of a great food culture too? Is every culture entitled to have its cuisine acknowledged as a “great food culture” (Pitte, 2010, 16).

JW: I consider a great food culture to be a combination of agricultural production, marketing, and consumption (at home and in cafes and restaurants) in a strong tradition over several centuries that preserves both a sense of the local and a sense of gathering together all kinds of different food at great markets (markets to be sure can be deceptive: a volume by M. de la

Pradelle (2006) has shown that in Carpentras in southern France market traders and supermarkets sourced their products from the same wholesalers, even though they were presented very differently to the consumer). Nevertheless, you are concentrating on the artiste, the great chef, while I am saying the practice runs down through all classes. Even if there is a difference in access to the foodstuffs, the structure of a food culture would be the same for people of all classes.

RN: National gastronomy can even be considered worthy of being celebrated and protected, but it implies an idealization of facts and time periods that seems to be symbolically significant for people, for example Pliny the Elder and Athenaeus.

JW: You call it an idealization but I call it small groups of people (producers and consumers) all over the country duplicating these models. Heritage is only a tiny part of good food production.

RN: I am concerned by the definition of a “great civilization” or a “great food culture.” I think that it may be a similar ethnological native category. Someone’s culture and hermeneutic circle will influence how a person evaluates a food culture. The anthropologist Jack Goody made a correlation between professional organized cooking and highly structured political power. It is a very seductive thesis that seems to work most of the time. But, then, we may ask ourselves why our simple Greeks, about whom Herodotus says that only madness can explain why the rich and powerful Persian king tries to conquer the poor Greeks, would “invent” gastronomy (Hdt 9.82)? How could the inventor of democracy invent or be the depository of “high cuisine”/ gastronomy at the same time (Goody, 1982, 104; Dalby, 2003b, 157)? The simplicity of the Greeks is a well known topos of ancient literature, as it is for the Roman republic. Foreigners and Greeks of the margins are then said to indulge in excessive eating and drinking: Syracusans for instance. When Plato makes such a claim (*Letters* 7.326b) it is because he sees great disparities to food access and pleads in favor of another social and political structure.¹ Many sumptuary laws had to be adopted in republican Rome. Food access is the name of the game in Antiquity. I argue that the greatness of Greeks’ cuisine is exaggerated. Is food a qualitative sign of highly elaborated cuisine or a means to mark social differences and political power (Borgna, 2004, 188)? We have to remember that food is only one of the means that can be used to show status. I am under the impression that scholars use concepts such as gastronomy and “haute cuisine” without using objective criteria. This kind of discourse comes from many factors: a romantic view of ancient/current cultures, a social, political, and ideological agenda, and some ethnological categories or mindsets that need to make a classification between different kinds of cuisine/culture. China is considered a great civilization and a great food culture. France: a great culture and a great food culture. Who are making such a claim: the French and the Chinese themselves? These cultures were

also great empires. But, then, why is Great Britain not amongst the ranks of the great food cultures?

JW: Nobody wants to go to a British restaurant outside the UK, Robin. Irish bars, OK. But not British restaurants. I agree with you completely about the Greeks (though Herodotus' simple Greeks are a cultural construction also), but would remind you that a great food culture is quite a different matter from gastronomy, which is a narrow category pursued by the wealthy.

RN: I come back to the question of categories of classification. What would be a Greek or a Roman food culture? Are they culturally distinctive? Have they defined boundaries and characteristics? Are they just better known or publicized? Or are we in the presence of strong and well known ethnological stereotypes or national discourse (Fischler & Masson, 2008, 11–4, 247, 254)? They are rather complex and ambiguous constructed categories that can include or exclude many different concepts, ideas, techniques, ingredients, and regions. Of course, Greek and Roman food cultures are characterized by local variations and specialties of more or less similar ingredients and structure. However, the lack of clear definitions and boundaries creates difficulty in grasping what they really are in essence. We tend to blend and mix up notions such as regional specialties, *terroir*, “high cuisine,” and so on. Therefore, they can be everything and anything. A food culture is a complex construction of personal perception influenced by the social and historical context and native categories and feedbacks from outsiders. Greek and Roman food cultures are convenient generic categories, which describe many different things that everyone loosely understands. However, it is almost impossible to come up with an objective, exhaustive, and universal way to define what is Greek or Roman, or a “great food culture.” To my mind, there is no real distinction between a “great food culture” and a “great culture.” An objective description of a cuisine or food culture is almost impossible to find. Scholars of modern Europe created myths around the creation of “national” specialists and historical figures. Furthermore, not only did scholars of the nineteenth century make inventories of local and regional products and describe cuisine as a sign of modernity with a depreciation of folk cuisine, but it also played a significant role in the construction of national identities in the development of modern Europe, as in France and in Italy for instance (Meyzie, 2010, 8–9; 261–3). These discourses emphasized what they considered to be worthy of the nation, excluding also popular dishes that the elite considered with disdain. Likely, we have access to a few descriptions of ancient dishes, but, most of the time, within a social or political discourse that we cannot fully understand.

JW: There we differ, dear colleague. I wouldn't talk about Greek cuisine, but Greek food, developed within a culture and a flora and fauna that has been written about for hundreds of years.

RN: A recent British television series presented by Gordon Ramsey in South

East Asia, *Gordon's Great Escape* (2011), made me realize that great recipes can be held in secrecy and passed by from generation to generation in oral cultures. In fact, many interviewed cooks were afraid to have their cooking secrets revealed and stolen by the three-Michelin-stars British kitchen superstar. For them, greatness came in part from knowledge, an expertise and secret ingredients, but also a reputation acquired locally. Literature and mass media allow expertise and reputation to be transmitted on a bigger scale. However, without traces in written documents, it is difficult for the historian to investigate a lost civilization or a social group that did not leave traces of its cooking in literature (Montanari, 2010, 45–50). Greatness in the kitchen also requires the apprenticeship of techniques and knowledge accessible only to a few. Then, cuisine can be elevated to an “art form.” Food can be used as a symbol that would create stark ideological differences between social classes. Eating like a member of one’s own group would be more or less a social obligation (Montanari, 2010, 46, 82–4). However, such a behavior would be normal in any type of society where the social and political differences must be shown and respected. In a literate culture, the goal would be exactly the same: an elite willing to discuss dishes and practices that would enforce the social and political structure in force. To eat the right dishes and to be able to talk about it in accordance with social conventions becomes a means of social distinction, a way to project self or social identity. Said differently, identity comes from group and self-consciousness. It comes from sharing similar properties: rules, values, region, foodstuff, ..., but also the identification of otherness, of foreign cultures (Bruegel & Lauriou, 2002b, 11–2). A great food culture would then correspond to elaborated discourses and similar ingredients and procedures. In a word, a great food culture would be an elitist construction of a category that would exclude by default “lesser food,” food eaten by the masses. It is an illusion constructed by cultural authorities and the practices of an elite, whose words and customs are not critically rejected, but unanimously accepted as factual and ideal.

JW: I concede that some national food culture is a product of bourgeois culture. Nevertheless, a great food culture includes all classes. As described in Galen’s *On the Powers of Foods*, peasants had their own solutions in times of food crises, and made their own recipes with what they had, but still within a Greco-Roman mindset and traditional customs and recipes.

RN: You are right, John. At the end of the day, a culture may be called a “great” food culture because people think that it is a fact. A long partial and chauvinist literary tradition made the case for it. However, in my mind, there is no objective way to evaluate the level of greatness of a culture or a food culture. Therefore, Greek would possess a great food culture because of the general conception people have about ancient Greek culture: a lexicon of local appellations, regional specialties, and techniques are developed and participate in the creation of an entire field of knowledge. Food becomes an

intellectual category with its own index at the great library of Alexandria. What can be named and described, then, acquires a reputation, becomes recognizable and recognized.

A “great food culture” would be made from a mix of many elements: an idealized and vaguely conceptualized notion, mixing past and present, national mythology, and some parts of reality (Montanari, 2010, 131–2; Pitte, 2010, 12). This does not imply that there is no (written) attempt to define them. However, it is also a sign that these notions are ambiguous and that their meaning evolves with time.

JW: I take your point, Robin. Quite right. But the issue remains for me food for all classes, not your cuisine.

RN: It has been suggested that Chinese cuisine is the result of the invention of a cuisine of every possible foodstuff available in a culture characterized by “undernourishment, drought and famines.” (Gernet, 1962, 135). Greek and Roman food cultures were certainly influenced by periods of shortage too. My point is that, in Western thought, the development of food habits seems to be described around the dichotomy civilization/decadence, proper/popular. In my mind, we are fooled by the subjective signification of the word “civilization” or its equivalent: “great food culture.” Should we not drop the “great” in “great food culture” then? I also have the same problem with the definition of what would be properly “Greek” and/or “Roman” food culture.

JW: Again, you have a point. However, what would be the difference between grand dining and food bought from street vendors? Your standard Roman aristocrat in Pompeii would have access to both, and would eat both too, depending on the time of the day and/or the social context. I grant that the excellence of certain wines and meats are available to the better off and not to all, but everyone has access to certain breads, certain cheeses, certain fruit, if they want it and can afford it.

RN: It is all about cultural perceptions according to one’s status. In some cultures, food can be considered mere fuel, but in Greece and Rome (perhaps as in modern France and maybe China), would taste have its importance? As Bourdieu would put it, people like what they know.

JW: I concede that class is crucial. Many of the choices are for bourgeois consumers. That does not make them bad. Health is also more closely linked with diet, in contrast with modern societies such as Britain where we expect the doctor to cure us with drugs from big pharmaceutical companies. Linking health with eating and exercise seems to be a strength that you find in Chinese medicine and Hippocratic and Galenic teaching. Healthy eating needs to be built into the idea of a food culture perhaps, and here the ancient world does excel.

RN: You have a point, John. But dietetics is still a bourgeois phenomenon,

available only to wealthy learned men. It is hard to know to what extent these notions would be available to or known by the poor masses. The importance of Greek culture in Rome during the Roman Empire explains why a scholar such as Athenaeus of Naucratis made an encyclopedia of Greek eating customs in previous times. The knowledge of Greek culture was a means of social distinction amongst members of the Roman elite. It is more a sign of snobbism rather than culinary taste.

JW: Books on dietetics are a cultural phenomenon that is pre-bourgeois, Robin. They belong to a literary culture. However, the practice of dietetics belongs to wise women and men in villages far from elite centers. What we read in Hippocrates and Galen is normally aimed at wealthy readers. I very much doubt whether the practice they theorize about was restricted to doctors and their clients. That practice and knowledge of plants was diffused across the population, as in all of pre-modern Europe.

RN: To sum up, everyone seems to understand what someone would mean by a “great food culture”, but probably no one would reach the same definition. It makes sense to use it in our everyday life, but less to make a precise and rigorous description of a food culture. French cuisine is great in part because the French make a big fuss about it and because others are disposed to believe them (Fischler & Masson, 2008, 21; Shields-Argelès, 2008, 265). However, would publicity in Greek and Roman literatures be enough to designate the food cultures as “great food cultures”? What we can find in written sources is not necessarily indicative of actual tastes and behaviors. Food historians must be aware of stereotypes, commonplaces, and urban legends (Meyzie, 2010, 3). A food culture is a constructed socio-historical category; its composition and its understanding vary from a historical context to another. However, there is no such thing as a fixed and a-historical food culture. Tastes, ingredients, and techniques evolve through time. How can the product of a dynamic organic cultural body be reduced to a fixed definition of what is proper and what is not?

JW: I don’t think we are as far apart as all that, Robin. Perhaps though we can agree that the Greeks and Romans did not have a great food culture? On your side because you do not accept the category and on mine because it lacks the system and longevity of the Chinese. Greek medicine matches Chinese achievement much more clearly than any Greek or Roman “food culture.”

RN: But what about the Mediterranean diet? Would it have its origins in the Greco-Roman food culture or is it again an intellectual construction more or less related to reality?

JW: The Mediterranean diet has its origins in periods well before Greek and Roman cultures developed, I would say. Its main features were adapted for Greco-Roman use, just as the Phoenicians and Libyans adapted it for their use. I would not link the Mediterranean diet with the Greeks and Romans in

particular. They just applied their books and philosophies to a set of geographical and climatic conditions that produced a particular flora and fauna.

FURTHER READING

For a general overview of food in world history, Flandrin & Montanari (1996) remains the best textbook; first published in both French and Italian, it is also available in a shorter English translation (1999). For the classical world put back in context: Wilkins & Hill (2006); Erdkamp (2012a). On foodstuffs and production: Auberger (2010); Halstead (2012). For a descriptive presentation of foodstuffs in Latin literature: André (1981). On cooking pots and cooking techniques in Bronze Age Greece: Isaakidou (2007). On Achaemenid food habits: Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1995). On food in ancient India: Prakash (1961).

NOTE

¹ The authenticity of Plato's letters is also controversial.

PART 1

Literature and Approaches

CHAPTER 1

Food in Greek Literature

Richard Hunter and Demetra Koukouzika

Food

In the fourth book of Homer's *Odyssey*, Menelaus tells the young Telemachus, Odysseus' son, who has come to visit him in search of information about his father, about how he (Menelaus) was delayed on his return from Troy by adverse wind conditions on the island of Pharos off the Egyptian coast. Supplies were running low, and with them what strength Menelaus and his comrades had left, but Eidothea, daughter of Proteus, the old man of the sea, took pity on them:

She met me as I roamed by myself, apart from my companions. They spent their time wandering around the island, fishing with bent hooks, for hunger gnawed at their stomachs.

Homer, *Odyssey* 4.367–9

This is one of the passages in which, as has long been recognized, the tale of Menelaus' homeward voyage, his *nostos*, foreshadows that of Odysseus, but does so in a lower, less heroic key. The distinction which Menelaus draws between himself and his crew is repeated when Odysseus and his men are stranded on the island where the cattle of the sun-god graze; hunger forces Odysseus' men to fish (12.332 repeats 4.369), and finally, when Odysseus is absent and asleep, his men succumb to their hunger and kill some of the cattle, with disastrous results. Hunger and the incessant demands of the belly (*gastêr*), a theme that resonates much more loudly in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad* (cf., e.g., *Od.* 7.215–18), becomes in fact a leitmotif of the scenes on Ithaca in which Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, tests the suitors and plots their destruction. While the feasting suitors consume Odysseus' flocks, leaving it to the careful and trustworthy Eumaeus to preserve the dwindling stocks as best he can (cf. esp. 14.5–28), the theme of the hunger that pursues the non-élite and outcast members of society is foregrounded in Book 18, in which the disguised Odysseus is forced to fight against the beggar Iros for a haggis (*gastêr*) "full of fat and blood" (18.45, on which see the notes of Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, & Heubeck, 1992, 49–50, and Steiner, 2010, 162). The seer Theoclymenus realizes that the day of death is at hand for the suitors when Athena distracts their wits, they are afflicted with weird fits of laughter, and "the meat they ate was foul with blood" (*Od.* 20.345–8).

However, what particularly attracted the attention of learned readers in antiquity about the respective tales of Menelaus and Odysseus was not, in

fact, the way they are used to differentiate the heroes from those beneath them, but rather the focus on the eating of fish as a food of “last resort.” It was noted at least as early as the fourth century BC that fish did not form a regular part of the Homeric diet (cf. Pl. *R.* 3.404b12-c3, Eub. fr. 118 KA = 120 Hunter); in the *Iliad*, in fact, fishing only occurs in similes (cf. 5.487, 16.406–8, 747 (diving for sea-squirts, a wretchedly unheroic occupation), 24.80–2), and Hellenistic scholars, the so-called “separators,” who believed that the two poems were the work of different poets, used the absence of any fish-eating from the *Iliad* as one piece of evidence (scholium on *Il.* 16.747). The greatest Homeric scholar of the Hellenistic period, Aristarchus, argued against the “separators” that Homer minimized references to fish and seafood because it was trivial (*mikroprepes*), just as “he does not show them eating vegetables” (scholium on *Il.* 16.747, cf. Ath. 25d). The matter has been much discussed in modern scholarship (cf. Davidson, 1997, 11–20), but it does seem most likely, as Aristarchus essentially realized, that Homer’s focus on meat-eating, particularly as an accompaniment to sacrifice, is part of the creation of a heroic, distanced world, and is not to be taken as a realistic reflection of elite life in the Bronze Age. The greater prominence of fishing and fish-eating, even if under constraint, in the *Odyssey*, is both a reflection of that poem’s greater concern with “the ordinary man” and the lessening of poetic distance between the events related and the Homeric audience (cf. 19.113, cited below).

As this example demonstrates, food and its uses in narrative carry symbolic value, as they do in many cultures and literary traditions. The cannibalism of the Cyclops and the corrupt and incessant feasts of the suitors both offend against the privileged good order of a well run society, as is seen, for example, in the paradigmatic episode at the beginning of *Odyssey* 3 in which Nestor and his sons greet Telemachus and the disguised Athena on the Pylian shore and, after completing their sacrifice, offer their visitors “roast meat” and wine. The most famous expression of this good order in antiquity was Odysseus’ so-called “Golden Verses” from the start of Book 9:

I say that there is nothing more delightful than when good cheer holds the whole *demos*, and through the hall feasters sit in rows listening to a bard, and beside them are tables full of bread and meat, and a wine-steward draws wine from a mixing-bowl and pours it into the cups.

The eating of food is, or should be, a sign of sharing in a community; Achilles refuses to eat as one manifestation of removing himself from the Achaean fellowship in his grief for Patroclus (*Il.* 24.129), but when he has accepted Priam’s offer of ransom for the body of Hector, thus returning to the shared world of heroic social values, he himself urges Priam to share a meal with him, an act that seals their agreement (24.601–28). This social value of eating is also stressed through the fact that, in the formulaic Homeric mode of composition, more verses are standardly devoted to the preparation and

distribution of food than to the actual process of eating, which is often dismissed in a single verse, “but when they had set aside their desire (*eros*) for drinking and eating.”

The manifestation of these ideas at the macro-level is the flourishing of the land and the food supply in a justly governed state. The disguised Odysseus tells Penelope that she is like a just king, under whom

the dark earth bears wheat and barley, trees are laden with fruit, flocks give birth without fail, the sea provides fish, and the people flourish because of his good rule.

Homer, *Odyssey* 19.111–4

So too for Hesiod, the presence of justice in a community is manifested in peace and the absence of famine:

For them the earth bears abundant life, on the mountains the oak bears acorns and bees live in its center; thick-fleeced sheep are weighed down by their wool, women bear children who resemble their parents, and the people flourish with good things continually. They do not travel on ships, for the life-giving earth bears crops.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 232–7

The *Works and Days* is centrally concerned with the relation between justice and the ordering of agricultural life; the struggle for food is what determines life, and famine is a reality, as indeed it was throughout the ancient Mediterranean. Work and the practice of justice will mean that “Famine will hate you, but you will be loved by fair-garlanded Demeter, the revered lady, who will fill your barn with the stuff of life” (299–301). Some four centuries after Hesiod, Callimachus told the story of Erysichthon, who inspired Demeter’s anger by cutting down the trees in a grove sacred to her in order to build a hall for “constant feasting,” itself a wasteful disregard of the proper use of food and resources. Demeter punishes this impious desire by precisely inspiring Erysichthon with insatiable hunger, so that he not only eats his parents out of house and home, but also eats “the mules ... and the racehorse and the war-horse and the white-tailed creature [? weasel] which made the little animals [i.e. mice] tremble” (Callimachus *Hymn to Demeter* 107–10). The prayer with which the hymn ends shows the persistence of the Hesiodic ideal throughout antiquity, as indeed we would expect in any pre-industrial society:

Hail, goddess, and preserve this city in concord and prosperity, make everything abundant in the fields: feed the cattle, bring fruits, bring crops, bring the harvest, support peace also, so he who sows may also reap.

Callimachus, *Hymn to Demeter* 134–7

Eating was not always a laughing matter.

Food, however, could be. A principal inheritor of the Hesiodic vision that associated plentiful food with a Golden Age (*Op.* 116-20) and a world of peace and concord was Attic, as also Sicilian (Epicharmus), comedy. In comedy, however, such visions of plenty had more to do with wish-fulfillment and the carnival world created by these dramas – note especially the culinary conclusion to Aristophanes’ *Ekklesiazousai* – than with moralizing protreptic, as in Hesiod. Food could still, of course, carry argumentative force. In Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* the central character makes a private peace treaty with the Spartans, which means that all of the good things of Greece of which the blockaded Athenians are deprived can flow into his private market. Particularly welcome is the eel from Lake Kopais that a Boeotian merchant brings:

O dearest girl, desired for so long, you have come, longed for by comic choruses and dear to Morychos. Servants, bring out my grill and the fan! Children, behold the noblest eel which has come as we desired after five long years. Greet her, children! I will give you charcoal in honor of this lady who has come to visit. Carry her out! Not even in death may I ever be separated from you, wrapped in beets!

Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 885–94

Dicaeopolis’ emotion is marked by an amusingly paratragic tone (we may be reminded of Electra greeting her brother at Soph. *El.* 1224ff); the return and recognition of such “dear ones” marks, as in tragedy, that the tables are turning and things are definitely looking up.

Comedy’s delight in dwelling on fantasies of food is particularly seen in a series of passages from Attic Old Comedy, preserved in Athenaeus, which translate Hesiod’s Golden Age vision into exercises in imagination and ingenuity in describing “the way things used to be” (Ath. 267e–70a, cf. Baldry, 1953). This is a world in which everything grows spontaneously, food cooks itself, and hunger is banished:

Every creek-bed ran with wine, cakes battled with bread around people’s mouths, begging them to swallow down – please! – the very whitest. Fish came home, roasted themselves, and were there ready on the table. A river of soup flowed by the couches, rolling along warm pieces of meat, channels of sauces were freely available ... roast thrushes, with side-dishes of cakes, flew into people’s throats ... and the children played knucklebones with slices of sow’s womb and tastiest bits of meat.

Teleclides fr. 1 KA

Comedy revels in descriptions of food. Our evidence is doubtless skewed by the dominance of Athenaeus as a source for the fragments of comedy, beyond the preserved plays of Aristophanes, but it does seem that fourth-century comedy before Menander, the so-called Middle Comedy, did to some extent

turn away from political satire towards more social themes, and that dining narratives and, all but certainly, staged meals and symposia became prominent. It is in this period that the boastful comic cook becomes a standard, and standardly absurd, character (cf. Dohm, 1964), and the fragments represent the same concern with gastronomy that is visible in, for example, the contemporary hexameter verse of Archestratos (see below). The search for the finest (and most expensive) ingredients and their preparation now apparently becomes a matter of great interest to the theatre-going public, and culinary extravaganzas may attain almost mythic status. Food has moved very far from being simply a way of dispelling hunger.

The comic *mageiros*, a “cook” who also supplies and if necessary butchers the ingredients, is not a slave employed by an élite household, but (usually) a free man of relatively low status available for hire. He is characterized by a very exaggerated sense of his own skill and importance; comic cooks present themselves as philosophers, generals, musical experts, and all-round saviors and benefactors of humanity. One of Philemon’s cooks claims that the merest whiff of his cooking brings the dead back to life (fr. 82.25-6 KA), and in the following passage of Athenion (date uncertain) a cook places “the art of cooking” (*mageirikê technê*) at the heart of, and the anthropology of, human progress:

Cook.

Don’t you know that the art of cooking has contributed more to pious living than any other art?

B.

Is it that kind of thing?

Cook.

Of course, you barbarian! It freed us from a savage existence in which no social compacts were possible and from the unpleasantness of cannibalism and introduced an order (*taxis*) and gave us this life we now enjoy.

B.

How did it do that?

B.

How did it do that?

Cook.

Pay attention and I’ll tell you. When there was only cannibalism and nastiness, a man who was no fool was the first to sacrifice a victim and roast meat; since this meat was more pleasant than human flesh, they stopped chewing on one another and instead began to sacrifice and roast

their flocks. Once they had some experience of this pleasure, they developed the art of cooking further from this beginning ... This was the only source for our general security, namely to work on our skills and further develop the art of cooking through the use of spices ... After this, as time went on, someone introduced a stuffed haggis ... and wheeled in a fish that had never been seen before, vegetables, expensive saltfish, porridge, honey ... Everyone now wanted to live together, people crowded together, cities were inhabited, all, as I said, because of the art of cooking.

Athenion fr. 1 KA

Part of the paradoxical wit of Euripides' sophisticated Cyclops in his satyr-play *Cyclops* is that the monster, "a deadly cook (*mageiros*) hated by the gods" (v. 396–7) with serious culinary interests (cf., e.g., Konstan, 1990), welcomes the chance to eat human flesh (properly cooked) as a pleasant break from hunting wild animals (vv. 241–9, 382–404).

It was not only comedy that caught the culinary bug in the fourth century. Probably from the early part of the century we have extracts from a lyric *Deipnon* by one of the poets named Philoxenus (*PMG* 836), written in the highly mannered verbal style of contemporary kitharody ("the new music"); this followed the progress of a very elaborate dinner through course after relentless course. From probably the middle of the century come also significant extracts of the *Hêdupatheia* ("Good living," the most probable title) of Archestratos of Sicilian Gela, a hexameter account in perhaps some 1200 verses of the best foodstuffs, particularly fish, from all over the Greek world, together with some advice on best practice in dining; this poem seems to have been within the Hesiodic tradition of catalogue and didactic verse, though in this case seasoned with a dose of epic parody (cf. Olson & Sens, 2000). The following extracts are not untypical:

Do not spurn the gilthead from Ephesus, the fat one, which the locals call "the little Ionian". Get hold of it, nursling of the holy river Selinous, wash it thoroughly and then roast and serve it whole, even if it is ten cubits long.

Archestratos fr. 13 Olson & Sens (2000)

In Rhodes, if someone does not want to sell you the thresher-shark, the one which Syracusans call "fat sea-dog", then snatch one, even at risk of death, and after that suffer whatever fate has in store for you.

Archestratos fr. 22 Olson & Sens (2000)

One of the most difficult problems concerning Archestratos' poem is that of tone. Although some allusive parody of Homer and Hesiod is identifiable ("in autumn when the Pleiads set, prepare the bonito any way you can", fr. 36.1–2 Olson & Sens, 2000), this is far from pervasive and most of the poem seems to be delivered "with a straight face"; moreover, the recipes which Archestratos offers are very far from outlandish. The skill with which the

highest verse form is used for a very untraditional poem on a very modern subject must be an important part of the wit; the poem's opening verse, "making a display (*epideigma*) of my research (*historiê*) to all of Greece" promises not just information but also the cleverness of a sophistic "display." We are drawn in both to identify with Archestratos' gourmet narrator and to be amused by the urgency of his gastronomic concern. Although there is a temptation to take the extraordinary detail with which different foods are linked to different cities and regions as pseudo-learning, intended to be seen for what it is, there is in fact no clear sign of this in the text, and we ought not to underestimate the number of people who actually did care about where the finest food was to be obtained; such people are not unknown today.

If the tone of Archestratos' poem seems often hard to catch, the "Attic Dinner Party" of Matron of Pitane (cf. Olson & Sens, 1999), dating very probably from the late fourth century BC, sounds the unmistakable note of epic parody:

Tell me, Muse, of the dinners, much-nourishing (*polutrophâ*) and many in number, which the orator Xenocles set before us in Athens ...

Matron fr. 1.1–2 Olson & Sens (1999)

The parody of the opening of the *Odyssey* suggests something of the same mock earnestness which we have seen in the cook speeches of comedy, and indeed Matron was heir to both the Homeric and the Aristophanic traditions; the "comedy of language" produced by this happy synthesis operates through the obvious incongruity between low subject-matter and grand language. Whereas in Homer it was the elderly Ithacan hero Aigyptios who was "bent over with age and knew countless things" (*Od.* 2.16), in Matron it is prawns which are "bent with age, but good to eat" (fr. 1.64 Olson & Sens, 1999). Fish and seafood indeed dominate what survives of Matron's parade of gastronomic pleasure, a suitably marine equivalent to Homer's Catalogue of Ships, but the very variety of food set forth, the obvious fantasy of the accounts (the fish presented could not all have been caught and served in the same period), the excess with which the food is enjoyed, and the narrator's moments of weakness all look forward perhaps to Trimalchio's dinner-party in Petronius' *Satyricon*:

My stomach could not hold out, for it was hard pressed by satiety: black broth and boiled pigs' trotters were subduing it ...

Matron fr. 1.93–4 Olson & Sens, 1999

The modern editors of the fragments of Matron's poem (Olson & Sens, 1999, 29–33) seek to associate it with Athenian political divisions of the late fourth century (Xenocles was one of Athens' richest citizens in this period, and one of the guests was Stratocles, perhaps the most notorious supporter of the hegemony of Demetrius Poliorcetes in the last decade of the century), but how significant the political "spin" of the poem was and thus how biting the

political satire must remain in the realm of conjecture.

Unsurprisingly, food is at home not just in comedy, but in other “lower” genres such as iambic poetry. The wretchedly broken fragments of the sixth-century iambic poet Hipponax of Ephesus contain some of our most vivid references to, and images of, food; Hipponax revels in portraying a lowlife of sexual and other excess, and food is a vital part of, and very meaningful signifier in, the heady physicality of this world:

One of them dined every day, at his leisure and without stint, on tuna and thick sauce, like a Lampsacene eunuch, and so ate up his inheritance. Now he has to dig at the rocks on the hillsides, chewing on ordinary figs and barley bread, stomach-filling for slaves.

Hipponax fr. 26 West

The very familiar metaphorical use of “eating” for wasting resources of all kinds is dramatized most famously in Penelope’s suitors, who waste the resources of Odysseus’ house (cf. above), but it was to become, for example, a standard complaint of the fathers of New Comedy against their wastrel sons. Happiness and its reverse are measured in what one can and cannot eat:

not putting his teeth around francolins and hares, not seasoning pancakes with sesame, nor dipping waffles into honey

Hipponax fr. 26a West

Hipponax’s culinary exuberance is not matched in what survives of Callimachus’ *Iambi*, for which Hipponax stands as the authorizing archaic model, and this is perhaps one marker of the discretion and selectivity with which Callimachus exploits the iambic heritage.

The *Life of Aesop*, a “popular” narrative drawn from several sources which might, in its current form, go back to the second century AD, begins with a scene in which two slaves gobble up some delicious figs belonging to their master and try to pin the blame on Aesop, a very ugly fellow-slave who is mute and therefore cannot defend himself. Aesop, however, outsmarts them and the culprits get a good thrashing. Slaves steal food – this is the working assumption of literature at all levels, but behind this assumption lie, of course, real facts about hunger and nutrition-levels barely sufficient to sustain life. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* the god “kidnaps” Cretan merchants and makes their ship sail to Crisa, the port of Delphi where they are to serve him in the temple. Their leader asks the god

Lord, since you have brought us far from our dear ones and our native land, this must have been in accordance with your wishes. How are we now actually to feed ourselves? We ask you to give thought for that. This land is not pleasant for the bearing of crops nor rich in meadowland, so that we could both survive and serve the temple visitors.

No one, abandoned in much of the Greek countryside, would find it easy to feed themselves; Sophocles' *Philoctetes* thematizes this, along with the hero's other sufferings. From another perspective, it was indeed pressure on the food supply that often led Greek cities to send forth colonizing missions. Food signifies at every level of society. Athenaeus preserves some 460 trimeters from the *Chreiai* of Machon, who perhaps wrote at Alexandria in the first half of the third century (Gow, 1965). The world of Machon's "anecdotes" is one of parasites, courtesans, and conspicuous consumption, but it is also a world that unpicks the assumptions and pomposities of polite society and does so with a sharp satirical eye (cf. Kurke, 2002). Excessive eating is very much part of that imagined society. Perhaps some four centuries later, the *Letters of Parasites* of Alciphron again dramatize, with a kind of black humor, the wasteful excesses of a (real or imagined) élite and the pathetic desperation of the parasite, who endures humiliations of every kind just for the sake of eating and/or eating well. At one level, such literary parasites are, as was recognized in antiquity and is made clear in Alciphron through intertextual allusion, the descendants of Odysseus with his curses on the incessant demands of the wretched belly (cf. above), but descendants who, unlike Odysseus, alienate our sympathy because of their refusal to observe the Hesiodic injunction to work to ensure that they have enough to eat (*Op.* 299–313). On the other hand, in laying bare the divisions within society the *Letters* also reflect obliquely the basic distinction between rich and poor, which extends far beyond the absurd world of the literary parasite. The same exuberance that we have seen in comic descriptions of food here sits somewhat uncomfortably with the mockery of those whose resources and/or family connections put them outside the charmed circle. In one letter a parasite tells his colleague how he was rescued by the doctor Acesilaus, who saved his life by bleeding him and making him vomit, and he claims now to have 'seen the light':

What things those filthy-rich chaps made me endure, taking it in turns to force me to drink too much and to eat more than the hollow of my belly can hold. One stuffed sausage into me, another shoved a huge chop into my jaws, and another mixed a drink for me, not wine, but mustard with fish-sauce and vinegar and poured it down me as though I was a storage-jar. I filled the pans, the jars and the chamber-pots with vomit, so that Acesilaus himself was amazed at where and how I had room for such a mess of food ... I shall turn to work and will walk around the Peiraeus, carrying ships' cargoes to the warehouses for a fee. It's better to feed my belly on thyme and barley groats, but with some security of life, than to treat myself to cakes and pheasants while every day expecting death that comes unseen.

Alciphron, *Letters of Parasites* 4.3–6 Benner-Fobes

In the *Works and Days* Hesiod gives his recipe as to how to spend the days of fiercest summer heat:

At that time there should be the shade of a rock and Bibline wine and milk-bread and milk from goats which are drying up and the meat of a cow which grazes in the woodland and has not yet had a calf and of first-born kids. As you recline in the shade, also drink some glittering wine, once you have taken your fill of food, with your face turned towards the fresh west wind. Pour in three portions of water from an ever-flowing spring which has not been muddled, and then a fourth portion of wine.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 588–96

The poet's recipe is clearly an imaginary ideal, and as such – with our eye on later culinary literature, such as Archestratos (cf. above) – we observe that he is already detailed and particular in his imaginings: wine from a special Thracian location, meat fed in a particular way. The gourmet impulse is already there. Two aspects of Hesiod's prescription for the use of wine at this idyllic picnic are of particular interest. First, Hesiod clearly marks the enjoyment of wine as an activity that follows that of food: here already we see the classic pattern of dining followed by symposium, as we know it from countless ancient sources. The modern practice of drinking wine with food is not the ancient Greek way, or at least not the way of the ancient Greek literate imagination and at least not from the archaic period on (contrast the Homeric situation reflected in Odysseus' "Golden Verses" above). Second, wine is to be drunk mixed with water – the drinking of unmixed wine being the drunken habit of non-Greeks – and the strength of the mixture is by modern standards very weak, three parts water to one of wine.

If Odysseus' "Golden Verses" do not quite describe what we recognize as the "classic symposium," they became (unsurprisingly) a foundational text for sympotic best practice. The *Odyssey* in fact places the correct use of wine at the center of its prescriptions for social practice through the long tale of Odysseus trapped in the Cyclops' cave. Odysseus had taken with him to the cave a very special wine that had been given to him by Maron of Ismaros, a priest of Apollo:

[It was] a wonderful, unmixed wine, a drink for the gods ... When they drank this honeysweet red wine, Maron would pour one measure of wine for twenty of water, and a wonderful, divine fragrance would rise from the mixing-bowl, and at that time no one would wish to refrain from drinking.

Homer, *Odyssey* 9.205–11

A strength of one to 20 is the stuff of fairytale, but Maron shows himself a civilized Greek in his respect for the wine's power. Odysseus finally escapes from inside the cave by offering the Cyclops unmixed draughts of this very strong wine, which the Cyclops declares to be very much to his liking:

“The life-giving land bears grapes for the Cyclopes – rain from Zeus nourishes them – and we have excellent wine. But this wine is pure ambrosia and nectar!”

Homer, *Odyssey* 9.357–9

Three large rustic bowlfuls of this wine are enough to knock the Cyclops into a drunken stupor, whereupon Odysseus and his men put out his single eye. If the Cyclops’ connoisseurship in the verses just quoted is amusing (did he really say that, or is this part of Odysseus’ skill as a story-teller?), the fact that he does not see Odysseus mix water with the wine, nor ask for this to happen, is a further sign that he is beyond the pale of civilized social practice. The proper use of wine is, like Odyssean cleverness (*mêtis*) and craft technology (vv. 384–6, 391–3), a marker of those qualities that, before long, would come to distinguish the “Greek” from the savage and the “barbarian.” The mixing of water with wine in special mixing-bowls (*kratêres*) from which all the guests were served had the very practical function of allowing steady drinking during gatherings lasting several hours, but it also emphasized the social fellowship of drinking and was a visible symbol of how wine was to be properly used. Wine was a gift of the god Dionysus, and Greeks were very aware that gods expected their gifts to be properly used:

Such gifts Dionysus gave to men as both a delight and a burden. The man who drinks more than sufficient will find wine a wild thing: it binds together his feet and hands and tongue and mind with bonds which cannot be seen and soft sleep loves him.

Hesiod fr. 239 M-W = 179 Most

From one perspective, Euripides’ *Bacchae* dramatizes the transference to the level of cultic myth of the blessings and the dangers that Dionysus, “a god most terrible, but also for men most gentle” (vv. 860–1), brings with him.

Much of what survives of archaic Greek poetry after Homer was probably performed in the setting of the symposium, and the proper conduct of the symposium and the use of wine form important subjects for that poetry, particularly in the elegiac tradition (Bielohlawek, 1940; Ford, 2002, 35–9); symposiasts were very self-conscious of the specialness of this form of semi-ritualized drinking. One of the fullest such passages occurs in the corpus of elegiac poetry ascribed to Theognis of Megara, but is probably the work of Euenus of Paros (fifth century BC):

Do not detain anyone of our number who does not wish to stay, nor send forth anyone who does not want to leave, nor, Simonides, wake from slumber anyone of us who, fortified by wine, has been taken by soft sleep ... As for myself, I have reached my limit of honeysweet wine, and I shall go home to the sleep that brings release from cares; I am at the stage where wine-drinking is most pleasant for a man – I am neither sober nor very

drunk. The man who exceeds his limit of drink is no longer in control of his tongue or his mind, he says stupid things which are disgraceful to sober men, and when he is drunk shame holds him back from nothing ... Either get up and go before you are drunk – do not let your belly overpower you as though you were some low menial hired by the day – or stay and do not drink. But your constant watchword is “Pour it in!”; that is why you get drunk ... you do not know how to say no.

Theognis 467–91

The social slur of “do not let your belly overpower you as though you were some low menial hired by the day” not only picks up the “belly” motif that we have already seen as prominent in the *Odyssey* (cf. above), but also reminds us that the symposia largely represented in archaic poetry were élite occasions in which the sense of éliteness was important. Another passage from the same corpus puts very similar sentiments in the mouth of someone who is already over the limit:

My head aches from the wine, Onomakritos, and the wine overpowers me, I am no longer in charge of my wits, and the room is revolving. Come, let me stand to test whether perhaps the wine has captured my feet as well as the mind in my chest. I fear that, now that I am fortified [by drink], I shall do something foolish and incur terrible reproach.

Theognis 503–8

Both the symposium itself and the proper way to conduct both dining and drinking were then taken over as literary themes by the learned Greek prose of the Roman imperial period (e.g. Plutarch, *Sympotic Questions*, *Symposium of the Seven Sages*, Dio Chrysostom 27), as suitable frames for the display of learning, for the nostalgic recreation of the classical past, and for the exploration and confirmation of themes of crucial ideological importance within the very differently organized, and very hierarchical, social structures of the Greek élite living under Roman rule.

The six verses of Theognis 503–8 (above) might easily, if transmitted differently, have been labeled as an epigram, and Hellenistic literary epigram was indeed one of the most important heirs of the sympotic traditions of archaic poetry (cf., e.g., Giangrande, 1968; Cameron, 1995, ch. 3). As with early elegy, the symposium is the imagined setting for literally hundreds of Hellenistic epigrams, and the eternal themes of wine, women (and boys), and song remain important:

“Drink, Asclepiades: Why these tears? What’s wrong? You’re not the only one cruel Cypris has captured, nor are you the only one against whom bitter Love has directed his bow and arrows – why become ash while you’re alive? Let us drink the strong draught of Bacchus. There’s only a finger breadth left till dawn; or shall we wait to see again the lamps which

escort us home to bed? ... Soon enough, poor fool, we shall rest through the long night.”

Asclepiades, *Anth. Pal.* 12.50 = 16 Sens

The poet here finds consolation not just in drink, but also in reworking a famous drinking-song of the archaic Lesbian poet, Alcaeus (fr. 346 V); the song reminds us that others have gone before – the lovelorn drinker is never really alone (on this poem cf. Hunter, 2010, 284–8; Sens, 2011, 102–11). Epigram also inherited, notably from Attic comedy, scenes of preparations for festivity:

There are four of us drinking, each has a girlfriend: one Chian jar is not sufficient for eight. Boy, go off to Aristios and tell him that the first jar he sent was half-full – it was certainly two *choes* short, and even more, I think. Run – we all gather at the fifth hour.

Posidippus, *Anth. Pal.* 5.183 = 124 Austin-Bastianini

The epigram asks us to wonder whether it is the host or the wine-merchant whose business practices are rather dodgy ... and, not for the first or last time, we smile to see ourselves reflected on the glittering surface of an ancient wine.

FURTHER READING

For surveys of food in ancient literature see Part 6 of Wilkins, Harvey, & Dobson (1995) and Chapter 9 of Wilkins & Hill (2006); books devoted to food and drink in the ancient world, such as Dalby (1996), will inevitably draw much of their evidence from creative literature. For genres where food is of particular importance, the following provide argument and bibliographical guidance: epic, Bakker (2013); comedy, Wilkins (2000a); Archestratos and gastronomic writing, Wilkins & Hill (2011), Olson & Sens (2000); Athenaeus, Braund & Wilkins (2000). The work of Gowers (1993) is a study of food in Roman literature, but also suggests many avenues of exploration relevant to Greek literature.

CHAPTER 2

Athenaeus the Encyclopedist

Oswyn Murray

The Author and his Work

Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* is essentially an encyclopedia of quotations. In her study of the quotation habit throughout human history the social anthropologist Ruth Finnegan says "Such collections have provided ways of organising and perpetuating knowledge. Almost all the principles of arrangement that we know today – by author; by subject, date, keyword, appended index, cross-referencing, alphabetic ordering – have a long history. Their specific application at any one time however has been bound in with the conventions and the preoccupations of the day or the interests of the compiler" (Finnegan, 2011, 149).

The *Deipnosophistae* exemplifies these remarks. The author has created a massive work of reference, a gastronomic encyclopedia or dictionary of quotations, which he must guide the reader through. This creates a problem for the modern as well as for the ancient user. For the modern user the problem is compounded by his peculiar interests, whether in fragments or in social history. Since this is a dictionary of selected quotations, the reader who consults it as a source for any type of information needs to know the author's principles of selection in order to understand and recompose the excerpts, to discern how their meaning may have been changed by their displacement from their original context to their new "decontextualized" position. The ancient user has a simpler problem: he or she must know the organizing principle in order to find his or her way around: in order to use this massive reference work of 30 papyrus rolls, stored in a box or set of pigeon holes, he or she needs to know how to locate the specific information that each roll may contain. This is easy in the modern world of bound volumes with page numbers and indexes, but not at all easy for the generations who originally consulted the work.

The epitome of the lost introduction of Athenaeus (1.4–7) suggests that he might have begun like Pliny with a list of previous writing of similar nature; but though this gives a preview of the work it seems to have been very unsystematic and gives few clues to the arrangement or indications of the actual sources that he used. In the absence of such authorial assistance one obvious answer for the frustrated reader is to compose an epitome, such as indeed was created for Athenaeus, and on which our knowledge of the first two lost books and other missing sections entirely depends. However, unlike

some Latin writers Athenaeus did not write his own epitome: it was compiled centuries later by a frustrated Byzantine user, between the transcription of the Marcianus manuscript by John the Calligrapher at the start of the tenth century, and the twelfth century, when the epitome was in turn used by Eustathius.

The archetype manuscript, the Marcianus, is unusual: it has been carefully transcribed, and in it the original organization of the work can be traced back with some degree of certainty. It was divided by the author into 15 “books,” each of which starts with a new preface; these were in turn each divided in the middle to create a papyrus roll of manageable length: these divisions are not signaled in the text but are recorded as marginalia in the Marcianus, which proves that this manuscript was itself carefully copied from a text that was in turn not far distant from the original papyrus rolls. These roll divisions may well belong to the original author, for in his recently rediscovered work *De indolentia* Galen envisages dividing certain books of his treatise on the vocabulary of comedy into two rolls because of their length. The books themselves usually contain a variety of subjects, and are not for the most part clearly divided into topics: there are no individual book titles in the manuscript with the exception of Book XIII, which begins and ends with the title PERI GYNAIKON.

Who was Athenaeus? His date is usually given as around 200 AD; but this depends on uncertain evidence. The Suda claims his *floruit* as the reign of Marcus Aurelius, but this simply reflects the dramatic date of the “dialogue,” which is indeed placed in the late second century, when a number of the characters apparently represented are known to have had a historical existence. It is however clear that the literary form does not relate to a real event: the characters are too separated in date and are ideal types rather than drawn from life; ancient dialogues seldom respect historical plausibility, as the dialogues of Plato, Cicero, and Macrobius all demonstrate. The first author to show awareness of the work as a whole appears to have been Macrobius, who saw Athenaeus as the ideal model for the learned feasting of his own *Saturnalia*, and who is now placed in the first half of the fifth century.

In fact the reality and the date of Athenaeus of Naucratis are revealed by three neglected passages. The first is to be found in the epitome, where the author lists a series of poetic writers on angling; the list ends with “Oppian of Cilicia who lived a little before us” (13b). Despite the fact that the epitomator often omits the names of authors cited, the chronological reference in this passage must directly reflect the original text of Athenaeus, and it serves to prove that Athenaeus belonged to the generation after Oppian. The *Halieutica* was addressed to “Antoninus,” and mentions his son as co-ruler (*Hal.* I 3); the author can therefore be dated to the later years of Marcus Aurelius, when Commodus was associated with his father (AD 176–80). It is clear from a derogatory reference to Commodus that Athenaeus was a contemporary of his

(*kath'hēmas* 12.537), but was writing after his death in AD 192.

The third passage is a list of famous drunkards at 10.435e–440e, which is reproduced in a much abbreviated form by Aelian in *Varia Historia* 2.41; as Casaubon noted, it is obvious that Aelian is borrowing from Athenaeus. Aelian, who took no less than 19 of his stories from Athenaeus, survived into the reign of Severus Alexander (222–235). Athenaeus therefore belongs to that period described so movingly by Cassius Dio: with the death of Marcus Aurelius “our history descends from an age of gold to one of iron and rust” (Dio 72.36). Like Dio himself and his contemporaries Philostratus and Aelian, Athenaeus’ work is an exercise in nostalgia, belonging to the flowering of early third-century writing that has often been connected with the literary patronage of the two sisters who created and controlled the Severan and Syrian dynasties, Julia Domna (wife of Septimius Severus) and Julia Maesa (grandmother of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander). Athenaeus can therefore safely be placed in the first quarter of the third century. Moreover the death of the character Ulpian is referred to at 15.686c as occurring peacefully a few days after his departure from the banquet; this is perhaps a disguised reference to a real contemporary event, for the jurist Ulpian, praetorian prefect under Severus Alexander, was murdered by his troops in AD 223.

That Athenaeus came from Naucratis is demonstrated by another fishy passage. He nowhere offers any personal information about himself, and his seven references to the customs of Naucratis are all derived from books rather than local information. However at 7.312a he refers to fish of the Nile, “if I can still recall them after so long an absence”; and he proceeds to give a jumbled list of names in no particular order. This passage occurs within a long discussion of various types of fish clearly derived from a lexicographical source, since they are given in strictly alphabetical order from *alpha* to *psi*: the interpolation is placed between *latos* and *leiobatos*; so it must be a personal addition to the source by Athenaeus himself.

Authors are not now considered significant, and perhaps doubly so if they are regarded as mere compilers, but their date can remain indicative of literary trends; this later date for Athenaeus perhaps allows us to separate him from the modern tendency to regard him as a member of the so-called “Second Sophistic” and to connect him with the still living tradition of sympotic writing exemplified by second century authors such as Plutarch and Lucian, or with the dramatic date of the banquet that he claims to describe: he must rather be related to a more sinister age, the brief outburst of creative talent that occurred as a reaction to the murder of the hated tyrant Elagabalus.

Many recent studies have focused on the Second Sophistic and the significance of the dialogue form, and there is no doubt that Athenaeus was concerned with this aspect of the construction of his work. The epitomator points out that the first sentence is modeled on the first sentence of Plato’s *Phaedo*: “Were you, Athenaeus, present in person at that noble assembly of

men now known as the Deipnosophists, which has been so much talked of around the city, or was the account you gave to your friends derived from someone else? – I was there myself, Timocrates.” (2a). This allusion serves to establish Athenaeus’ literary credentials, and the whole work is set in an imagined context in which Timocrates is informed by Athenaeus at meetings that take place between them on different days (perhaps four) about the discussions at a feast that appears to have taken place rather implausibly on a single occasion (Guillén, 2000). This “outer frame” continues at the beginning and end of each book from start to finish, but otherwise seems to serve little purpose. Each book ends with a formal signing off to the supposed interlocutor Timocrates, who remains a remarkably colorless character; and the next book begins with an equally formal introduction. The envoi when signing off each book usually refers to length rather than subject matter, as if to suggest that Timocrates’ patience or the supply of papyrus has temporarily run out; he is scarcely intended as a participant or as an indicator of change of subject in any sense in the organization of the work.

The introduction to the whole work, even in its abbreviated epitome form, suggests that Athenaeus discussed and characterized the participants in his dialogue at length, in the manner of Chaucer’s *Prologue*. Many of his characters bear the names of, or seem to evoke, famous figures, mostly of the late second century – such as Masurius, Plutarch, Ulpian, and the two most famous doctors of the age, Galen and perhaps Rufus of Ephesus; others seem to be intended to recall historical figures of a more distant past, as for instance Philadelphus; and yet others are perhaps invented or stock characters such as the Cynic Cynulcus. It is clear that the context in which these figures are placed is unhistorical, since (as with the dialogues of Plato and Cicero) even the real characters mentioned were not exact contemporaries with each other.

There are a number of oddities in Athenaeus’ deployment of his characters. Their personae do not always seem to correspond to their known or alleged historical interests: Masurius is described as a jurist but offers no legal insights; Ulpian appears as a genial symposiarch rather than an administrator and legal expert. Two characters (Ptolemaeus and Rufinus) appear not to speak at all in the extant parts of the work. Most significant is the fact that Galen, although described as one who had “published more medical and philosophical treatises than all his predecessors and was not inferior to any of the doctors in his diagnoses” (1e), is only once (in the discussion of bread) called on to pronounce on medical aspects of diet. Indeed on the main occasion on which his expertise is tested, in a section on Roman wine, his views bear no relationship to the known views of the historical Galen. Galen’s surviving works offer a great deal of information on diet and the medical properties of foodstuffs, none of which is to be found in Athenaeus; but this perhaps merely confirms what is probably the most significant weakness in the whole of Athenaeus, his general lack of interest in contemporary medical

views on food and diet.

Nevertheless there is a certain rudimentary characterization of the participants, and the sections are divided between them in a way that might suggest that the concept of a dialogue is not just a *captatio benevolentiae*, a nod to the long tradition of the learned symposium. It could be intended as a guide to the reader, since to some extent the information presented is divided out in accordance with the imagined characteristics of the participants – the pedant, the lawyer, the Cynic, the uninvited guest who interrupts, the urbane host, and so on. But the problem is that Athenaeus carries this through so unsystematically and incoherently that it actually led the nineteenth century editor Georg Kaibel to the hypothesis that the text we possess is not the original, but itself an epitome. Although modern commentators no longer accept this view, it remains clear that no ancient reader could ever have traced a particular quotation or set of quotations by reference to his memory of the character who is supposed to have uttered the relevant passage: “Cynulcus says this somewhere” – but where? Cynulcus’ interventions are scattered over many books, and what unity do they have?

Athenaeus’ dialogue is an exercise in nostalgia, depicting the imagined activities of an earlier generation. More convincing is his praise of the host of his banquet, Larensios, a wealthy public servant who had amassed a library to rival those of the distant past, from Polycrates and Pisistratus to Euripides, Aristotle, and Ptolemy Philadelphus: according to Athenaeus, other rich men ought to be like him and share their wealth and their books and generosity with the learned men of their age (2d–3d).

Larensios is described by Athenaeus as an expert in religious law, both Greek and Roman, who had been put in charge of sacrifices by the emperor Marcus Aurelius (2c) and had served as procurator of Moesia (398d–e). Hermann Dessau was surely right to identify him with P. Livius Larensis, whose tombstone set up by his wife records him however simply as *pontifex minor* (ILS 2932). He may also be the *procurator patrimonii* “Livius Laurensis,” who handed over the corpse of the murdered emperor Commodus for burial at night (*SHA Commodus* 20). He would then be a prominent historical figure of the right generation to act as host at Athenaeus’ imaginary banquet. However, the idea of Larensis as the direct patron of Athenaeus is chronologically implausible.

It is far more probable that Larensis was the founder-patron of a library that still existed in Athenaeus’ day, and perhaps belonged to a descendant of Larensis. In a fundamental study Christian Jacob has portrayed Athenaeus as a natural librarian, obsessed with giving exact source references in his compilation; although he admits that “there is no evidence to suggest that Athenaeus was Larensis’ librarian” (Jacob, 2000, 88, 2013), what better way of commemorating the great collection of rare books that Athenaeus was himself perhaps responsible for, than to present their riches in the form of a

literary feast hosted by the library's original founder?

Content

In the year AD 192 a devastating fire destroyed the main library quarter of Rome: Galen's newly rediscovered work of consolation *Peri alupesias*, addressed to a fellow book-lover, reveals how much was lost. The imperial libraries of the Palatina and the Domus Tiberiana, together with the library in the Templum Pacis, went up in flames; his own vast collection of books housed for safe keeping while he was out of Rome in the imperial warehouses on the Via Sacra was completely destroyed, along with the whole booksellers' quarter. Among those books lost were famous editions such as the Aristarchan Homer, Panaetius' Plato and manuscripts produced in the age of Cicero by Atticus and other great bibliophiles.

Galen's account reveals how by the late second century Rome had become a city of libraries and book collectors. Athenaeus' nostalgic portrayal of this world is what gives his account a verisimilitude that is far more convincing than any truly historical narrative might possess. He praises Larensios for his learning and convivial generosity, and exhorts other rich men to behave in the same way (3d), in a veiled criticism that recalls the remarks of Ammianus a century later on the degenerate lifestyle of the fourth-century Roman nobility (Ammianus 28.4), and the earlier description by Lucian of the wealthy but ignorant book-collector who refuses to give scholars access to the books he has so avidly collected (Lucian *Ind* 30). The setting and the context are therefore intrinsically more convincing than the detailed description of the banquet and its participants: they offer an occasion for a display of learning derived from books in a milieu that undoubtedly existed in third-century Rome.

It is in the nature of compilatory works that they are unconcerned with originality. Ruth Finnegan describes the process in relation to the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*: "The *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* was certainly a work in its own right and drew on many contributions from its original compilers. But it unquestionably also owed a substantial debt to its predecessors. It then itself in turn served as a source for others' compilations" (Finnegan, 2011, 150). Macrobius, who might perhaps even be drawing on a lost passage of the original preface of his model Athenaeus, is even more explicit:

Please do not fault me if I often set forth the accounts I draw from my varied reading in the very words that the authors themselves used; the work before you promises not a display of eloquence but an accumulation of things worth knowing. You should, furthermore, count it as a bonus if you sometimes gain acquaintance with antiquity plainly in my own words, at other times through the faithful record of the ancients' own words, as

each item lends itself to being cited or transcribed.

(Macr. *Saturnalia* praef. 1.3-12)

And he continues with a passage about bees creating honey from the flowers they visit, which is itself derived from Seneca.

At one point Athenaeus describes his work as a *synagōgē*, a collection (509e). The creation of the *Deipnosophistae* is a process of accretive transformation, or as Christian Jacob calls it “excerpting quotations and distributing them in clusters of topics” (Jacob, 2000, 90); and the search for Athenaeus’ sources must be conducted with due respect for his methods of work. An earlier generation often imagined that the order of material in the work was to be explained by the use that Athenaeus made of his sources, whether stated or inferred by modern scholarship; but that is only partially true, and more evident in certain sections than in others. To judge from the epitome, Athenaeus at the start appears to have listed the obvious sources, previous Greek and Roman works on cookery (1.3–7). As Jacob has shown, he is remarkably conscientious in the course of the book both in giving references to the original works he cites and in referring to his intermediate sources. He quotes or digests long sections of his authors, but intersperses them with appropriate material derived from elsewhere. Often these long citations appear to constitute whole sections of the work with their own clear structure, which itself interferes with the organization of the main text.

Book 5 is a good example of his working method. The primary frame of the book is a collection of excerpts, which Düring (1941) traced to two works of “Herodicus the anti-Platonist,” an author of the mid-first century b.c., who wrote *peri symposiōn* (on symposia) and also *pros ton philosokratēn* (against the admirer of Socrates). The first of these gave a critique of philosophical and modern symposia, as contrasted with those described by Homer (185a–193c, together with a section of a later book, 11.504–8); the second offered an attack on the biographical tradition of Socrates’ courage on the battlefield, exposed the anachronisms in Plato, and discussed the rivalry between Plato and Xenophon (5.215–9, together with 11.504–9). In the course of these excerpts Herodicus is referred to three times (192a, 215f, and 222a).

Between these two works Athenaeus has inserted a series of excerpts from other named works describing lavish royal spectacles of the Hellenistic age, beginning at 193d. A passage from Polybius about the sympotic antics of Antiochus Epiphanes (193–6) is followed by long excerpts from Kallixeinos of Rhodes on the pavilion and *pompē* of Ptolemy Philadelphus and the dining galley of Philopator (196–203), and from another author, Moschion, who gave an account of a similar ship built by Hieron (203–9). A discussion of kings who were *philodeipnoi* (fond of feasting) offers Athenaeus a chance to refer to his own lost work on the kings of Syria and give an account from Posidonius of the philosopher Athenion, who became tyrant of Athens in the Mithridatic

War against Rome (211d–215c). This offers a means of returning to Herodicus on Socrates, through the claims of other philosophers to have been generals, and the untrustworthiness of philosophers in general (215c–221a). A brief conclusion closes the book.

The organization of the book is dependent on the selection and arrangement of excerpts, but it is not incoherent, and there is no evidence of any intermediate sources between Athenaeus and the authors he cites.

Athenaeus' authors can also be scattered across the encyclopedia in short passages, as the work of Wilkins on Archestratus (Wilkins & Hill, 2011) has shown. Archestratus wrote in the fourth century BC a famous epic poem on food and its consumption, whose wide diffusion in antiquity is shown by the fact that it is given a number of different titles, and the way in which quotations appear embedded in passages from other writers, as well as apparently directly cited from the original. Here the 62 fragments are dispersed in accordance with their subject-matter through the whole encyclopedia.

One of the most obvious characteristics of Athenaeus' material is the enormous preponderance of references to Greek comedy, especially Old Comedy of the fifth and fourth centuries: Sidwell (2000) lists quotations from around 260 named comedies of fifth-century writers alone. This concentration on authors of Old Comedy is striking when contrasted with the smaller number of passages from New Comedy (Menander and his associates), which predominate in most other anthologies. This distortion of ancient comedy can be explained by the philological tradition. Whereas later generations loved to quote moral maxims from Menander and Euripides, the philologists were obsessed with the language of comedy in relation to the defense of a good Attic style; the language of comedy was also of interest for its colloquialisms and abstruse or puzzling vocabulary. From the early Hellenistic period a major industry of commentaries, lexica, and so on developed. Some of the losses that Galen suffered in the fire of AD 192 are particularly relevant: he had been busy excerpting passages from the earlier first-century BC work of Didymus Chalcenteros on words in Attic comedy *in 50 books* into a two-volume epitome of 6000 *stichoi*; he had compiled this as a guide to fifth-century usage by medical writers such as Hippocrates. One of Athenaeus' speakers claims that he has similarly compiled excerpts from more than 800 plays of Middle Comedy (336d). It is clear that Athenaeus had access to such systematic handlists of Attic comedy in which all usages of any word were arranged according to categories: we need not therefore imagine that he searched the comic corpus for items relating to food, or for discussions of words such as *parasitos* or *kottabos* or *skolion*. All this material was already available; but its bias does not of course reflect properly the character of the underlying material or the realities of the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

It must be from similar lexicographical sources that Athenaeus derived his

long lists of different breads (108f-116), and vegetables and pork products (Book 9). The most striking of these lists is that of fish, in a discussion filling the whole of Book 7, which is arranged (as he says at 277) in strict alphabetical order from *alpha* to *psi*. This type of order is uncharacteristic of Athenaeus and clearly does not belong to him, since (as already mentioned) he ignores it at 312a in the brief list of Nile fishes drawn from his own experience. We must assume therefore that Athenaeus has used a pre-existing lexicon of fish probably relating to comedy, into which he has inserted quotations from authors such as Arcestratus.

The creative talents of Athenaeus are perhaps best exemplified in the passage mentioned earlier, about famous drunkards (435e–440e). Here he cites in a dozen pages 20 authors from Herodotus to Posidonius as his authorities for anecdotes. They are artfully arranged in a manner that suggests they have been collected by Athenaeus himself, rather than belonging to some preexisting miscellany.

The tradition of Alexandrian philological scholarship is reflected in the fact that all these materials are gathered together by Athenaeus in blocks, so that in general one may find all the material related to violence, *tryphe*, parasites, music, wreaths, games, vegetables, fish, meat, cakes grouped together: if you can remember where to find it, it is all there, and in one place. However, this does not mean that Athenaeus derived the arrangement of his material entirely from the widespread use of previous lexicographical sources: he seems rather to have used these as a basis for collecting material from his own reading, which he has arranged according to the conventions of contemporary scholarship.

Ordering

The differences and similarities between the organization of Athenaeus' work and the lexicographical tradition can be seen most clearly by comparing it with the *Onomasticon* of Julius Pollux, an author from the same city of Naucratis who belonged to a previous generation: his work is dedicated to the young prince Commodus, like that of Oppian. Pollux was a successful sophist, appointed to a chair of rhetoric at Athens, and criticized by Lucian; his work survives in epitome. The *Onomasticon* was the ancient equivalent of a thesaurus, a vocabulary of words and synonyms useful for composing in historically correct Attic Greek. It is ordered thematically according to groups of topics, each of which follows on in a relatively obvious and coherent manner from the previous subject. The first half of Book VI begins with "symptotic vocabulary": first names for dining-rooms, then names for groups of participants, couches, cushions, coverings; synonyms for the leader of the *symposion* and for the members, the various types of servant, designations of

the various kraters, characteristics and origins of wine, wine pourers, words for drinking, mixed and unmixed styles of drinking, attributes of hosts and guests, and libations. Section 32 moves to foodstuffs and styles of eating, different types of food by category, words for cooking, washing, cleaning, shapes of wine vessels, lamps, incense, wreaths, riddles, kottabos, and with Chapter 112 the end of the *symposion*. The quoted examples in the work are drawn largely from Attic comedy and oratory.

Despite the fact that the two authors draw much of their material from similar wordlists of comedy, the different quotations chosen by Pollux and Athenaeus do not suggest any relationship between the two texts. There is of course a certain inevitable similarity in their coverage of topics, although the order of treatment is different: this is most visible in the final sections of each work, where both cover washing (Poll. c.92; Ath. 408b–411), the shapes of cups (Poll. c.95–100; Ath. Book 11), incense (Poll. c.104–5; Ath. 686–692e), wreaths (Poll. c.106; Ath. 669d–685), riddles (Poll. c.107; Ath. 448b–459b), and *kottabos* (Poll. c.109; Ath. 665d–668f). This serves to suggest that, whereas the sources of Athenaeus and the selection of sympotic topics for treatment in the *Deipnosophistae* are relatively conventional, their arrangement was decided by the author himself.

There is then a fundamental coherence and order to the material in the work, but in what manner is it ordered? Or to put it in another way, how can the user of this encyclopedia locate the material relevant to his own interests? We have seen that this is not possible by using the book divisions or the chronological indications of the narrative; nor is the disposition of material between speakers of any help. The attempt to understand the work as a historical event or as a literary dialogue fails: these literary devices simply distract attention from the underlying organization of the work.

The answer is given by the epitomator in a passage surely derived from the original preface: “the plan (*oikonomia*) of the work is an imitation of a bountiful feast and the arrangement of the book follows the courses in a dinner” (1b).

That is to say, it is paradoxically the slaves who determine the order of material, which follows the order of a feast; for the signal for a change of topic is neither any internal division nor a change of speaker, but the entry of the slaves with each successive dish, which provokes a change of subject. In order to find a topic you must remember what its placing would be in the order of a feast; that is a simple and universal principle of far greater significance than any alphabetical ordering, and it enables the user to unroll the appropriate scroll of the work at roughly the right place.

However, there remains a problem: this logic of the banquet conflicts with the logic of much of the material contained in the work, for what is described is a Roman banquet, not a Greek *deipnon* or *symposion*. The placing of much of

the Greek material is therefore distorted to suit Roman sensibilities. For the discussion of food is not arranged historically; there is no recognition (despite Herodicus' treatise) of the differences between archaic and classical customs on conviviality, nor more importantly of the food revolution that took place in the late classical period, when serious cookery (*contra* see Nadeau, 2015b) as opposed to festival or sacrificial feasting began. The excesses of royal banqueting in the Hellenistic period are, it is true, well catalogued; but the very great differences between Greek and Roman commensality are ignored, and the difference between early Roman and late Republican and Imperial feasting is largely forgotten. In reconstructing the history of ancient foodways we need therefore often to disregard the setting that Athenaeus gives us. For he is not providing us with a ready-made history, but with an amalgam of evidence from all periods as if they had coexisted together. We need to approach his information as we approach the fragments of earlier authors that he provides, with due regard to original historical context.

There appears to be one important exception to this ordering. The epitome suggests that the first part of Book 1, after the introductory material, is composed of a section "On the life of the heroes in Homer," which is also quoted in the Suda (s. *Homēros*), where it is attributed to Dioscurides' work "on Homeric customs." The excerpt continues to 1.19a, and returns briefly at 24b–25f. Much of this is very similar to the Herodicus material found later in Book 5. However, from 1.19 onwards there appears a heterogeneous collection of material, which appears to offer a contrasting picture of various forms of later luxury. Heath (2000) has tried to reconstruct this book in relation to different speakers in the dialogue, but I have argued that this is a subsidiary question. Since it survives only in epitome it is hard to be certain what the original intention of Athenaeus may have been in the first two books: but it was perhaps reasonable enough to begin with an introduction on Homeric customs, and make a contrast with later forms of feasting. This could have appeared outside the main banquet structure. But where then does the coherent banquet presentation begin?

This seems to be around 1.20b. Just before that there is a discussion of Homeric and more recent attitudes to pleasure and luxury, with remarks about honors to famous entertainers in different periods (possibly an indication of a passage in which Athenaeus, like Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, caused the entertainers to be sent away). At this point the word *horoi* appears in isolation, creating a textual crux; but, as a number of modern editors have suggested, it probably marks a division in the original of Book 1, at the point of the transition to a new papyrus roll. A new start seems to be signaled by praise of Rome as the center of the civilized world, which is a typical prefatory *topos* for the beginning of a new section. The book continues with a discussion of dancing and forms of dress and decorum suitable to the preliminaries of the feast.

At 23a the first indication of the proceedings begins. After mention of the dogstar (an obvious sign of thirst) the participants are given a drink. This introduces a long section on wine: a brief discussion of reclining and of words for eating is followed by Italian wines, then Greek wines (with a digression on lists of products from different places), and other types of wine. The book ends with the opposition between wine and cabbage (which can kill vines and cure hangovers).

Book 2 begins a new day for Timocrates, exhausted by the previous account. However, the topic of wine continues until 40f, where the discussion turns to water. Hunger sets in at 47a; the guests take their places (47e); the furniture of a dining-room is described and a written list of the appetizers (*propōmata*) is presented to the guests (49d): the central break in Book 2 may well come here. There follows a list of appetizers, which resembles a modern Lebanese first course: fruit (plums, cherries, walnuts, almonds, chickpeas, lupins, beans, olives, radishes, pine kernels, eggs); then perhaps prepared dishes (mallows, gourds, mushrooms, marshwort, truffles, nettles, asparagus, snails, bulbs, thrushes, small birds, pig's brains, oil, pickled fish, vinegar, herbs, cucumbers, lettuce, artichokes, palm tops). At 71e–f there is a formal closure of Book 2 and an address to Timocrates. However, Book 3 continues the same topic, with beans, cucumber, figs, apples, quinces, and citrus fruit. At 85c (perhaps again the center of the book), a new dish of oysters and shellfish is brought in. At 94c another dish appears, of meat prepared by boiling and various forms of offal. At 104c the next dish appears – crayfish, lobsters, and shrimps; at 106e a new dish of fried liver and fried fish. At 108f the diners demand bread, and a long list of types of bread follows, which derives from a glossary, since it refers to the glossary compilers (*glōssographoi*, 114b); in one of the few medical sections Galen discusses the nutritional value of bread (115c).

The actual feast (*deipnon*) is announced at 3.116a with a starter of saltfish (116–21), and a section whose coherence is obscure on various drinks, hot and cold water, sweet wine, and puddings. But the *deipnon* has still not yet actually begun at 127d, and will be interrupted by Books 4 and 5.

Book 4 consists of a series of long excerpts from the early Hellenistic royal banquet letters of Lynceus and Hippolochus, and descriptions of Athenian, Spartan, Cretan, Persian, and barbarian and other Greek dining practices; Book 5 also consists of long excerpts from Herodicus and other Hellenistic writers, as described above.

The true *deipnon* begins with Book 6; after an introduction on tragedy addressed to Timocrates (222–4), “slaves entered bearing an enormous quantity of fish from sea and lake, on silver platters, so that we marvelled at the wealth and luxury on display” (224b). This leads to a discussion of fishmongers, their pretensions, and the price of fish (224–8), the use of silver and gold at banquets (228–34), and the history of *parasitōi* (originally an honorific term) and flatterers (*kolakes*) drawn mostly from comic lexis (234–

48) and historians (248–62). At 262 the slaves come in with a new set of dishes, which provokes a discourse on slaves and slavery (262b–70a). Yet another dish of fish and other edibles appears (270e), but the discourse on slavery in Greece and Rome continues to the end of the book (275).

With Book 7 the *deipnon* is reaching its climax (275), and they begin to eat the fish. Athenaeus tells Timocrates that he will give an account of each fish as described by the diners with information that they had collected from so many books that he will not list the sources; he will proceed alphabetically (276–7). And indeed he does for an entire book (apart from a fascinating digression (278d–81e) on philosophies of pleasure, provoked by a reference to Archestratus): the fish list proceeds from *amiai* (277e) to *psyttai* (330b). At the end of this Athenaeus announces the topic of the next book. As I have argued earlier this alphabetical ordering is uncharacteristic of Athenaeus, and must have been created by a previous author, even if Athenaeus has made insertions in it.

Book 8 is a puzzling book: it begins with an apparently separate section on fish taken from a collection based on Middle Comedy (331–47). It then gives a series of anecdotes about a famous wit, Stratonicus the *kitharistēs* (347f–52d). There is a passage on Aristotle’s biological categories (352d–4d). At 354d a new dish is brought in, provoking a passage on the views of medical writers on fish (355–8d) and some miscellaneous material on rituals of collection (358–60) and stories from the history of Rhodes and Ephesus (360e–1e). Noise outside announces that the date is the Roman festival of the Parilia, which leads to a brief discussion of festivals and contribution feasts (361e–5).

Book 9 begins with *paropsiai* or *opsaria* (side dishes). At 368f these dishes are brought in; they include all sorts of birds and vegetables. Athenaeus proceeds with a non-alphabetical discussion of shredded vegetables (turnips, cabbage, carrots, beets, leeks, gourds). This is followed by chickens (373) and male pigs (374d). At 376c a half-roast half-boiled stuffed pig is brought in, accompanied by the cook; this triggers a passage on the virtues of cooks, led by the cook himself, who addresses the guests as “judges” (379c) and turns out to be as learned as them (383f); he also produces a stuffed goose (384). This episode may well be a set-piece in Roman banquet literature, for it also occurs in Petronius, where Trimalchio has the cook brought in for a beating for failing to gut a pig, whereupon the cook proceeds to slit it open to reveal an amazing cornucopia stuffing (*Satyricon* 49f). The cook follows with pheasants and other “non-flying birds” (386d–99a), pork is included with sucking pigs (396), then more birds (399), parts of pigs, hares, boars, kids, “the rose-flavoured dish” (some sort of casserole), roast fowls, lentils, soups, and peas. These all seem to be examples of the cook’s art; and much of it is in a non-alphabetical list form that may well be derived from one of the cookery authors mentioned within it at 387d.

At last the meal is over, and water for washing hands and towels are brought

in (408) to provoke another display of learning.

Book 10 begins appropriately by discussing gluttony (*adēphagia*). Heracles is the great Greek glutton, Odysseus is another – not surprisingly because all athletes are gluttons; there follows a list of female and male gluttons and excessive wine-drinkers.

At 423 Ulpian announces the traditional transition from the *deipnon* to the *symposion*. Discussion of the mixing of wine and water follows, beginning with wine-pourers, the ratio of wine to water, the Scythian use of unmixed wine, and *proposeis* (427d). Under the topic *peri methēs* (drunkenness) portrayals of Dionysus drunk are deplored, laws about drunkenness discussed, and great drinkers listed in a passage related to Aelian (VH 2.41). Female drinking follows (440d), then great drinking nations (442b), drinking in politics (444b), falling over drunk (447), and drink and love. From 448b to 459b there is a long section on riddles (*griphoi*); finally (459b), the next day's theme is announced.

Book 11 is devoted to drinking cups, beginning with a general account of famous and decorated cups and proceeding at 782 to a long alphabetical list of cup shapes. It ends with a section on Xenophon and an attack on Plato attributed by Düring to Herodicus (above: 504–8).

Book 12 discusses pleasure (*hēdonē*, 510–13d) and “the luxury (*tryphē*) of nations and cities,” in Persia, Lydia, Etruria, Sicily, Sybaris, Tarentum, and elsewhere (513e–28e). Athenaeus then passes to individuals given to *tryphē* from Sardanapalus through kings, tyrants, and politicians (530–43c) and philosophical schools (544–8); then from 549e to 554 very fat men (especially kings) and very thin men, ending finally with insanity brought on by self-indulgence.

Book 13 concerns the other traditional pleasure of the Roman orgy: it is the only book that has an individual heading and endpiece, and is titled “on women” (*peri gynaikōn*). It begins with married women and marriage (555–60); the next topic is love and beauty, male and female (561–6e), *hetairai* (566e–77d), a long section of their witty sayings from the iambic poet Machon (577d–83d) and other sources; at 585f the relations between politicians, philosophers, orators, poets, and famous *hetairai*, elegies of Hermesianax of Colophon and other love poems; the love of boys (601e–5d), the love of statues, animals' love of humans, passion for flute girls, the praise of beauty (608e); then from 610b to 612e a digression, a diatribe defending the persecution of philosophers.

Book 14 begins with other forms of sympotic entertainment: *geloia*, jesters and entertainers (617b), flutes, *mousikē* (623e) and dancing, and musical instruments.

The banquet service resumes with the *deuteraí trapezai* (639b). There is

reference to the Roman Saturnalia and similar Greek festivals; then the desserts begin with discussion of *epidorpismata* and other names such as *epaikleia*. From 644e to 647c cakes are listed in non-alphabetical order, then more cakes, fruit, and nuts, in a list that includes birds, meat, pigs, and cheese, and begins to look like a new meal: this is perhaps a form of appendix of additional material.

At 658e the cook enters to offer a *muma*; more praise of the cook's art (*mageirike technē*) and the various guilds of cooks follows. The dish turns out to be sort of sweet haggis (*mattyē*) (662f) and the book ends with more about cooks and the art of cookery.

The *symposion* draws to a close with book 15, which begins with a distinction between the *deipnon* and events after the *deipnon*. The first section concerns the game *kottabos* (665d), then wreaths (669d). At 676e boys enter bearing wreaths, and there follows a list of wreaths (677b) and flowers used in them (680e); in another section *peri murōn* slaves bring in perfumes, which leads to a list (690b–2f) followed by the topics of libations, *skolia* (693f), paeans (696a), and parodies (697a). Lamps are called for at 699d and the guests prepare to depart with paean and libation.

To the modern eye there are interesting oddities in this account of a Roman banquet. The first is that it centers on fish as the ultimate luxury food (rather like a modern Rick Stein). Crustaceans are prominent, and birds and pigs are well represented, but the latter mostly as offal and as side dishes. The full range of fruit and vegetables seems to be present (but not much about beans). Other animals, especially those larger ones suitable for roasting or boiling, such as goat, sheep, and cattle, are virtually absent; thus there is not much about sacrificial meat (apart from a little in Book 4). There is very little about cheese, and other milk products are not discussed. It is not surprising that there is no reference to the diet of the poor, to famines or cities under siege (the eating of rats, cats, dogs, babies, etc.). The relatively brief account of homosexuality in comparison with the treatment of both marriage and heterosexual activity perhaps reflects contemporary Roman as opposed to earlier Greek preferences. On some of these topics there was probably no literary tradition, but for others there surely was. This is not a description of either the full literature or the full diet of the ancient world, and it is interesting to speculate on why there is no discourse on these matters.

Nevertheless, Athenaeus has followed the order of a banquet faithfully through its various stages. He has managed to incorporate all his information and excerpts arranged logically in relation to this structure, disregarding book divisions and (for the most part) his characters. There are very few signs of disorder, duplication, or repetition of categories; once one has grasped it, one can navigate this massive work without much difficulty. And one is left with the impression of a remarkably coherent work, which, despite artistic failures with the dialogue form and occasional and inevitable confusions in

manipulating the double narrative framework, reveals in its basic structure the highly original mind of a master encyclopedist. Athenaeus is no unimaginative compiler; his ability to manipulate his material is his greatest and most original achievement, for his work is the most coherently organized of all the encyclopedias that have survived from antiquity.

Athenaeus' system was of course fully recognized by the great early commentators on the text, Casaubon and Schweighäuser, and it had enormous resonance in the Renaissance: it was a rich source of influence in the age of the humanists (Jeanneret, 1987). However, few recent writers have put the fundamental order of the encyclopedia at the center of their analysis. This is the last major transformation of the sympotic theme in antiquity, but its structure lived on in a long literary tradition. For the principle of ordering information according to the rhythm of a meal has remained throughout the western tradition as the fundamental order appropriate to all books on cookery: even today our books are arranged according to the same principle of a notional meal, from soup to fish, meat and poultry, to puddings and sweets and cakes. It is thanks to Athenaeus that we all know instinctively where to find our favorite recipe without the need for an index.

FURTHER READING

Fundamental to all study of Athenaeus are the great commentaries of Isaac Casaubon and Johannes Schweighäuser (the latter incorporates the former). Since then the best work on him has been done by Kaibel and Düring. There are many important recent studies in the work of Braund & Wilkins (2000), especially those contributions cited above. Much modern work has been concerned with literary aspects of his dialogue structure: see Lukinovich (1990), Romeri (2002), Nadeau (2010a), and Jacob (2013). It will be obvious that I take a more traditional view.

CHAPTER 3

Food in Latin Literature

Matthew Leigh

There is nothing that a certain sort of Latin author would sooner write about than food. Those who set out to compose works in the very highest modes may regard the topic as too earthy, too bodily to detain a truly sublime imagination, but there are many others for whom what and how they and their fellow-countrymen eat is a pleasure too delicious to refuse or a scandal too clamorous to ignore.

Tragic Gastronomy and Epic Decorum

Perched at the top of the hierarchy of genres are tragedy and epic. Neither is any too comfortable with detailed evocations of food. The only type of meal fully at home in tragedy is that where the basic rules of civilization go horribly awry: Tereus eats his son Itys, slain and cooked up for him by his wife Procne and her sister, Philomela, whom he has raped and whose tongue he has then excised; Thyestes feasts on not one but three of his sons as his brother, Atreus, takes revenge on him for his earlier crimes of adultery and of theft. These myths were both staged by the tragic poet Accius in the closing decades of the second century BC, and the Atreus legend proved particularly popular with later Latin poets. The only such work to survive complete is the *Thyestes* of the Neronian poet Seneca, and this magnificently ghastly work is replete with descriptions of civilized commensality gone wrong: Atreus is precise in his observation of the rules of sacrificial cooking and neatly divides body parts into those that should be roasted and those that should be boiled. The only problem is that the victims slain and served are his own kin. Thyestes in turn is a somewhat over-zealous eater, chewing the flesh of his children like a wild beast and using ever more meat to force down that which he has already eaten and now blocks his throat. When his stomach starts to groan, what he hears is the moaning of his children, whom his brother has murdered and he himself unwittingly has consumed.

Epic has a strikingly conflicted relationship with food. On the one hand, the banquet is among the most typical features of the form; on the other, we are told in only the haziest of terms what the heroes actually eat. In the first book of the *Aeneid*, the basic needs of Aeneas' shipwrecked followers are met by the seven stags he slays for them and by the 20 bulls, 100 pigs, and 100 lambs and their mothers sent to them by Queen Dido (Verg. A. 1.180-97, 633-6). The bodies of the stags are "huge" and the pigs are "great," so there is nothing delicate or feminine to compromise the grandeur of the work. There then

follows the grand banquet staged in the palace at Carthage in honor of the Trojans. Much detail is offered of the luxurious setting for the meal, the curtains and the napkins alike, but what is actually consumed is indicated only through epic periphrases (Verg. A. 1.701 *Ceres* for bread) or in terms as colorless as “food” (Verg. A. 1.704 *penum*) and “feasts” (Verg. A. 1.706 *dapibus*). Dido sips at the wine (Verg. A. 1.734) but drinks long draughts of love (1.749 *longumque bibebat amorem*). We learn as little here of Punic cuisine as we do of that of Capua in Book 11 of the *Punica* of Silius Italicus. Here Silius describes the encounter between the previously manly Hannibal and the dubious pleasures of Italy’s wealthiest city. Yet the same meal that first exposes him to the “unknown face of haughty luxury” (Sil. 11.281–2 *faciemque superbi | ignotam luxus*) is evoked with a vocabulary that gives scarcely any idea of what is actually served: banquets (Sil. 11.270 *epulas*, 284 *epulis*), feasts (Sil. 11.275 *dapes*), goblets (Sil. 11.276 *pocula*), and food (Sil. 11.277 *penus*). Even Lucan, whose *Civil War* is a great deal less in thrall to the Vergilian mode than is the *Punica*, passes up the opportunity to offer any detailed bill of fare when the tenth book of the poem depicts the banquet put on for Julius Caesar by Queen Cleopatra in her palace in Alexandria. The poet refers to “luxuries not yet transported to Roman generations” (Luc. 10.110 *nondum translatos Romana in saecula luxus*), but the description of the dishes served does no more than indicate that they are the same animals that the Egyptians also worship as gods (Luc. 10.156–63). Carpaccio of cat? Ibis en croûte? The poet who perhaps goes further than any other in describing the dissolution of the human body in battle clearly regards even the most remarkable elements of its sustenance as unworthy of his pen.

Satire

Precisely what epic obscures, satire brings into brilliant focus. From Lucilius writing in the late second century BC onwards, satire is composed in the same dactylic hexameters as epic and can often attain to dimensions bordering on those of that loftiest of forms. Yet where epic fills its world with gods, heroes, and men, satire has no place for any but the last of these groups and relishes the description of all that is most gaudy, all that is most base about our mortal life. A key text here is Juvenal’s fifth *Satire*, in which the indignities of the patron–client relationship are evoked through an account of the haste with which a friend, Trebius, rushes to dine at the house of the wealthy Virro. To the satiric speaker, Trebius sacrifices all shame (*pudor*) and sense of honor (*honor*) as he decrees that the greatest good is to eat from another man’s loaf (vv. 1–11).

The humiliations to which Trebius exposes himself begin with the seating plan, as the client is relegated to the most distant couches and the beargarden that ensues as men of his stamp and the patron’s freedmen lob Spanish earthenware flagons at one another. Yet worse still is the realization brought

by each and every course that he is just not as good as the host and those sat near him; and it is here that satire most vigorously describes exactly that which epic prefers to omit. Where the patron drinks vintage wines from the days of the Social War and the best estates on the Alban hills, his client downs stuff that even greasy wool would decline to absorb. Where the patron drinks from cups encrusted with beryl and amber, the client has a four-spout glass cup so damaged that one could trade it with a beggar for matches. When, if ever, that same client is allowed to touch any more luxurious vessel, it is with a waiter watching over him should he be tempted to steal it away. Where the client is served by a North African so intimidating one would be alarmed to meet him on a dark night, the patron looks to “the flower of Asia” to take his plate or mix his wine. Where the client is given bread so hard you could crack a molar on it, the patron dines on loaves of the softest wheat. Where the client is given a prawn wrapped in an egg, the patron dines on a lobster proudly looking down on the party from a rampart of asparagus. Where the patron dresses his fish in the finest olive oil of Venafrum, the client pours on his cabbage stuff better suited to use in lamps. Where the patron is brought a lamprey from the seas of Sicily, the client puts up with an eel fattened on shit in the sewers of Rome. Where the patron is offered goose-liver, chicken, boar, and truffles, the client receives ... precisely nothing. It is in this loving evocation of every detail and every stage of the meal that satire makes its point.

Juvenal's account of dinner at the house of Virro is but part of an extensive tradition of writing about food in satire. The fourth poem in Horace's second book of *Satires* is an encounter with the crazed Catus, who declaims in a setting reminiscent of the *Phaedrus* of Plato and in a tone suggestive of the lofty verse of Lucretius all that he has learned from an unnamed guru on the theme of food. In the eighth poem of the same book, Horace also describes a dinner at the house of the wealthy freedman Nasidienus that anticipates some of the social satire of the Petronian *Cena Trimalchionis*. Juvenal himself, meanwhile, reverts to the theme of the banquet in his 11th *Satire*, in which he invites his intriguingly named friend, Persicus, to share a meal that forswears all the fripperies of the age. All this sounds quite admirable if a little pious. The one issue that remains is what a man called Persicus is meant to make of it. The name suggests the luxury of the East and particularly Horace (*Carm.* 1.38), who proclaims hatred for Persian trappings (v. 1 *Persicos odi, puer, apparatus*) before making a plea for simplicity. Will Juvenal's Persicus now relish the milk-fed kid, mountain asparagus, eggs, grapes, pears, and apples promised at vv. 67–76? or will he regard them as just a little dull?

Food is also a central element in the same poet's fourth *Satire*. This opens with an attack on Crispinus for spending 6000 sesterces on a mullet for his own selfish consumption (Juvenal 4.15–22). It then looks back to the reign of the bald Nero, Domitian, when the same Crispinus was one of 12 men

summoned to an imperial council in order to advise on what to do with a massive Adriatic turbot given to the emperor by the man who caught it. This event is introduced with a parody of the epic invocation of the muses (Juvenal 4.34–6) and the council itself recalls the epic motif of the Council of the Gods as seen in Book 10 of the *Aeneid* and Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*. Yet this grand manner is in stark contrast to the matter under discussion, and the policy finally formulated is first that a dish big enough to hold the fish be made, then that potters should henceforth accompany the emperor's camp in anticipation of a similar emergency in future (Juvenal 4.130–5). Montanus, whose proposal this is, first enters the council in the form of a stomach slowed down by its paunch (Juvenal 4.107) and is marked by Juvenal as one familiar with the luxury of the reign of Nero, who could tell at the first bite whether an oyster came from Circeii, the Lucrine, or Rutupiae in Kent, and could identify the shore from which a sea urchin had been fished just by looking at it. Such is the expertise that holds sway in the diminished days of Domitian.

Early Roman Literature and the Joy of Pork

The earliest exponent of Roman satire was the poet Ennius, whose works date from the late 3rd and early 2nd Centuries b.c. Inasmuch as only a few fragments of the *Saturae* survive, and the later Roman satirists characteristically treat Lucilius and not Ennius as the founding father of their form, it is not entirely clear how much continuity there was between Ennian satire and what followed. Yet the form that later grammarians would associate with the *lanx satura*, a dish groaning with a rich miscellany of dishes, displays a signal interest in food even in this earliest manifestation (see, e.g., fragments 1, 12–13, 14–19 and 21 in Loeb *Remains of Early Latin* vol. I). In a separate work, the *Hedyphagetica*, Ennius also revealed himself to be something of an exquisite. This Latin work on *Fine Things to Eat* comes equipped with a Greek title suggestive of the same pretensions to excellence as are implied by the use of French in many an English restaurant menu. The single surviving fragment is an 11-line account of the best places from which to source fish and seafood and displays the same concern for provenance as is found in the *Life of Luxury* of the Sicilian Greek poet Archestratus of Gela. A similar account featured in Book 11 of the *Human Antiquities* of the first-century BC scholar and satirist M. Terentius Varro, though he took a specifically Italian focus and looked to products as unassuming as grain, wine, oil, figs, and honey as well as fish (Macr. 3.16.12).

The *Saturae* and *Hedyphagetica* are by no means the only manifestations of the love of food in the written and dramatic culture of the period. The first performance at Rome of tragedies and comedies adapted from Greek models is dated to the Ludi Romani of 240 BC. Yet the Roman comedies in Greek

dress known as *comedia palliata* also drew on unscripted native forms such as mime and what is known as Atellane farce. The latter drew its name from the Oscan town of Atella in Campania and turned on the adventures of a very limited group of stock figures: Maccus the fool; Pappus the old man; Bucco the boastful; Manducus or Dossennus the glutton. According to Varro, the name Manducus derives from the verb for chewing (*mandere*) while Horace refers to the comic writer Plautus as a Dossennus among the greedy parasites (*Epist.* 2.1.173 *quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis*). When Latin writers of the late second century BC revived Atellane farce, its preoccupation with bodily appetite is apparent from the titles given to his plays by the leading exponent of the form, Pomponius Bononiensis: *Maialis*, *Porcus*, *Verres Aegrotus*, and *Verres Saluos* all suggest a healthy interest in eating pork. Likewise, when the great comic poet Plautus takes over the figure of the parasite from the Greek dramatists, he transforms him from an urbane companion, as much at home at the hunt as at table, into a man of appetite little different from a Manducus or Dossennus and one who dines on nothing more gladly than on pig. The eponymous hero of the *Curculio* is a parasite who yearns for “ham, sow's udder, sweetmeats” (*Cur.* 363 *pernam, sumen, glandium*), while Ergasilus, the parasite of the *Captivi*, treats the return of the young master as his cue to launch an all-out assault on the pork-butchers of his native Aetolia: “what a hammering to the ham and a battering to the bacon! what utter destruction to the udder and flaying to the flesh! what exhaustion to the slaughterers and the meatmen!” (*Capt.* 903–5 *quanta pernis pestis veniet, quanta labes larido, | quanta sumini absumedo, quanta callo calamitas, | quanta laniis lassitudo, quanta porcinariis!*). It is presumably also a parasite who, in a fragment of the *Carbonaria* attributed to Plautus, looks forward to a dish of ham, udder, chops, belly-cut, hard flesh, and sweetmeats (*ego pernam, sumen, sueres, spetile, callum, glandia*).

What is it about the pig that makes it so prominent in popular entertainments of this period? The answer must lie in its relative accessibility to people of every class. Writing in the middle of the second century BC, the Greek historian Polybius observes the plenitude and relative cheapness of pigs throughout Italy and particularly in the North Italian plain (Plb. 2.15.2-3; 12.4.8). The specific area that he identifies is still the home of great pork products, be it prosciutto di Parma or mortadella di Bologna, and it may be no accident that the Atellane author Pomponius was a native of Bononia, that is to say of Bologna. In his work of the 30s BC, the *De Re Rustica*, Varro introduces the topic of pig-farming with the question “But who comes forth from the Italian port?” (Var. *R.* 2.4.1) and the appropriately named Tremelius Scrofa (a *scrofa* was a brood-sow) proudly claims that the ancestors all kept their own pigs (Var. *R.* 2.4.3). That the rustic poor might still have access to at least a little pork is also implied by the tale of Baucis and Philemon in Book 8 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Here the elderly couple receive some unexpected guests and do all that they can to welcome them. Yet the only meat that they

can readily offer is a little bacon hanging from the beams (Ov. *Met.* 8.647–50, cf. Juv. 11.82–4) and all else on offer is vegetarian fare. When they decide to add to this meal the goose on which they depend for their daily supply of eggs, their guests reveal themselves as gods and spare the bird.

On one level, then, the pig is an unpretentious pleasure and one with which all are at home. In this respect it may be contrasted with those various forms of fish that spell pure luxury. We have already seen some of this in the fish of the *Hedyphagetica* of Ennius and in the lobster and the lamprey dished up for Juvenal's Virro. In the *Mostellaria* of Plautus, the decadent urban slave Tranio leaves the stage at the end of the first scene and makes for the port in search of fish (*Mos.* 66–7). This encapsulates the life of luxury into which he has lured his young master in the absence of his father and which threatens the family with ruin. In a fragment of another play attributed to Plautus, the *Baccaria*, an unnamed character speaks of the procession heading for his stomach and looks forward to burying in his belly the sturgeon that long hid from him in the sea (Macr. 3.16.2). Pork is different. It *can* indeed become a luxury foodstuff, but only if the cut consumed is something like sow's udder (*sumen*), which a series of writers represent as a special luxury (Lucil. 1175 Marx; Pers. 1.53; Mart. 2.37.2; 10.48.12) or if the pig is stuffed with other beasts in the manner of the “Trojan pig” condemned by Titius in his speech in favor of the 161 BC *Lex Fannia* designed to curb excess expenditure on food.

The thing about the pig is that, first and foremost, it just tastes great. Other animals might lend themselves better to conspicuous consumption and the wanton display of wealth, but the pig draws the Italian back to his true self. According to Pliny another master of popular drama, the mime-writer Publilius Syrus, supped every day after he had acquired his freedom on belly-pork (*abdomen*) and was eventually known as Sumen (*Nat.* 8.209). In the *Satyrica* of Petronius, the wealthy but uncultured freedman Trimalchio asks the cultured but penniless Encolpius whether he prefers Publilius Syrus to Cicero (Petr. 55); displays a love of Atellane farce (Petr. 53, 68); and treats his fellow-freedmen to the sort of pork dishes that they truly love (Petr. 45.4, 49, 69.8). When he produces his own version of the “Trojan pig,” it turns out to be pork stuffed with more pork sausages (Petr. 49). What more could a red-blooded Italian want?

Identity and Cultural Change

In Plautus what makes an Italian is not so much pork as porridge (*puls*). In the prologue to the *Poenulus* the author of the play is identified as “Uncle Plautus Son of Porridge-Eater” (*Poen.* 54 *Plautus patruus multiphagonides*). The last word is almost untranslatable with the native foodstuff, the *puls*, yoked to the Greek verb for eating and the very Greek form of the patronymic at the end. In the *Mostellaria*, as Tranio shows the confused father Theopropides around

his neighbor's house, he states that “No porridge-eating barbarian builder undertook these works” (*Mos.* 828 *non enim haec multiphagus opifex opera fecit barbarus*). Here the term “barbarian” is an example of the affectionate embrace of a term used disparagingly of the Romans by the Greeks and corresponds to those occasions where Plautus refers to translating comedies into Latin as translating them “into barbarian” (Plaut. *As.* 11, *Trin.* 19: *vortit barbare*). As for porridge-eating (*multiphagus*), it again combines Latin *puls* with the Greek verb for eating and suggests the Greek contempt for a people who can subsist on such muck. The point that they fail to grasp is that the Romans really love this muck.

Writing in the mid-second century B.C., M. Porcius Cato includes a recipe for what he calls “Punic porridge” (*puls Punica*) in chapter 85 of his *De Agricultura*: porridge groats, honey, an egg, and some fresh cheese are all that you need. This sounds very like an extension into the alimentary realm of Cato's ongoing project to define early Roman identity and to suggest that he is its most perfect embodiment in the modern age. Yet the reference to this as “Punic porridge” may cut against this at the same time and suggest openness to external influences. A century later, Varro claims that sacrifice to the gods of bean porridge (*puls fabata*) was a feature of early Roman religion (*De Vita Populi Romani* fr. 20 Riposati = Plin. *Nat.* 18.118–9; fr. 21 Riposati = Non. p. 341.33). Writing in the early first century AD, Valerius Maximus suggests that *puls* was a staple of the diet of the ancestors and that it was more commonly used than bread (V. Max. 2.5.5). All this implies a certain pride in porridge; its very plainness is proof of the solidity of the society that subsists on it.

Another symbol of plain food and good living is the turnip. Plutarch tells of how Cato the Elder bought the farm of Manius Curius, hero of Rome's war against Pyrrhus in the early third century BC, and appends the story of how the Samnites came to the house of Curius hoping to bribe him with gold and stumbled on him boiling turnips; the Samnite gifts were spurned and the ambassadors assured that no man for whom such a meal sufficed could be bought with gold (Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 2). Boiled turnip also features in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, though here its devotee is Romulus, the first king of Rome and now a god (Sen. *Apoc.* 9, cf. Mart. 13.16). The person in question changes but the association remains the same: plain food is the stuff of early Rome. All this is set in contrast by Pliny with the vanity of the Greeks, who dedicated at Delphi a golden radish and a silver beet but a turnip made of lead (Plin. *Nat.* 19.86). You can tell from this, he adds, that Manius Curius was not born in Greece (Plin. *Nat.* 19.87).

To a significant strand of Roman writers, changes in food and culinary practices become a crucial measure of their nation's change through the acquisition of empire and the eventual collapse into luxury. M. Terentius Varro is a crucial figure here and these interests recur through the fragments

of his *De Vita Populi Romani* as well as his *De Re Rustica*, which survives complete. Another wonderful storehouse of information is the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, which draws heavily on Varro as well as on other historians of Roman culture such as Cornelius Nepos and Fenestella. What these writers have in common is a concern to identify when specific types of artisan, or when individual products and dishes, first came to Rome, so that what results is a wonderfully detailed account of the transformation of a nation of porridge-eaters and turnip-fanciers into one where peacock, flamingo-tongue, and tortoise were all the rage (Plin. *Nat.* 10.133; 15.45; 32.144).

Varro assures us that the early Romans ate from wooden or earthenware dishes and never reclined at table (Varro, *De Vita Populi Romani* fr. 30a = Isid. 20.11.9; *De Vita Populi Romani* fr. 59 = Non. p. 547.20; Var. *L.* 5. 121–2; cf. Plin. *Nat.* 32.157–60). Beechwood is a central element in such stories, be it the beechwood sacrificial flask that was the only thing M. Curius took for himself as booty from the enemy (Plin. *Nat.* 16.185) or the beechwood cups in which the shepherds of Vergil's *Eclogues* take such pride (3.36–7). In the days of empire, by contrast, the fashion is all for citrus-wood tables imported from North Africa, and even the great Cicero is drawn into this peculiarly masculine vanity (Pers. 1.52–3; Str. 17.3.4; Plin. *Nat.* 13.91–2, 102). Pliny reports that the early Romans ate porridge instead of bread (Plin. *Nat.* 18.83) and that when they did have bread it was traditionally made from barley (Plin. *Nat.* 18.74). Even so basic a staple as bread can thus be drawn into narratives of cultural change, and Varro states that the word “baker” was initially used only for those who ground wheat out in the country regions (Varro, *De Vita Populi Romani* fr. 32a = Non. 152.13; fr. 32b = Plin. *Nat.* 18.108). Pliny adds that professional bakers were unknown at Rome until the victory over Perseus of Macedon in 168 BC (Plin. *Nat.* 18.107–8). The arrival of the cook as artisan is also regarded as the fruit of empire; Livy claims that it was only after the 187 BC Asian triumph of Manlius Vulso that what had previously been the least valued sort of slave began to command a serious price, and what was previously treated as a necessity became an art (Liv. 39.6.9).

All these are stories that the Romans told about themselves. Many of them must in fact be fantasies. Plautus was certainly writing about bakers long before the defeat of Perseus, and introduced a boastful artisan chef into his *Pseudolus*, first performed four years before the triumph of Manlius Vulso, as well as into the undated *Aulularia*, *Menaechmi*, and *Mercator*. Were all these figures of whom his audience had heard as operating in the cities of Greece but never seen? This seems unlikely. Yet the accumulation of such claims and the proliferation of detail testify to the need to think through a process of cultural change that all could see around them. The need to trace and date changes in culture must also have been felt early on, because Pliny quotes the second-century BC historian L. Calpurnius Piso for the claim that bronze

dining-room furniture, like the artisan cook, first came to Rome with the triumph of Manlius Vulso (Calp. fr. 34 Peter = Plin. *Nat.* 34.14). Piso's contemporary Cassius Hemina also contributed to such debates but in an interestingly skeptical manner: sumptuary laws controlling expenditure on sea-fish are, he claims, nothing new but can be traced back to the reign of Numa (Hem. fr. 13 Peter = Plin. *Nat.* 32.20). Writing in the next century, the historian Cornelius Nepos included in his *Exempla* accounts of the prestige in different ages enjoyed among fish by the sturgeon, bass, and hake and among birds by the thrush, stork, and crane (Nep. fr. 17 and 19 Peter = Plin. *Nat.* 9.60, 10.60). He also claims that only two instances of dining furniture made of silver were seen at Rome before the victory of Sulla (Nep. fr. 22 Peter = Plin. *Nat.* 33. 146). Fenestella, meanwhile, whose career straddled the reign of Augustus and the first years of that of Tiberius, argues on the basis of onomastics that early Rome was rich in cattle, pigs, and sheep (Fen. fr. 5 Peter = Plu. *Mor.* 274f–275a) and claims that olive trees were unknown in Italy, Spain, and Africa in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus (Fen. fr. 7 Peter = Plin. *Nat.* 15.1).

Many of these claims survive to us only through citation in the *Natural History* of Pliny, and the same work is at pains to trace many another moment of transformation in his nation's diet: the first whole boar served in Rome (Plin. *Nat.* 8.210); the first reserves for the same animal and for shrews (*Nat.* 8.211; 8.224); the development of fishponds (*Nat.* 9.168–74); the first experiment in snail-farming (*Nat.* 9.174); Hortensius and the introduction of peacock (*Nat.* 10.45); the invention of foie gras (*Nat.* 10.52); the recent arrival of guinea-fowl (*Nat.* 10.74); how birds came to be fattened for the table and the consequent sumptuary law of 161 BC (*Nat.* 10.139–40). Nor is Pliny only interested in animals. His account of trees and vines traces the coming to Rome and then points west of the peach tree (*Nat.* 15.45), certain species of apple (*Nat.* 15.47), the pistachio (*Nat.* 15.91), and the cherry tree, which was unknown in Italy until the Pontic campaign of Lucullus against Mithridates but has now spread to Britain (*Nat.* 15.102). Luxury, meanwhile, is stigmatized with frequent reference to the throat (*gula*) and to greed (*ganea*), as Pliny traces the recent fashion for mushrooms found around oak trees (*Nat.* 16.31, cf. 22.9); how cabbage and thistle and cauliflower thorns came to be prized by gourmets (*Nat.* 19.139; 19.152; 21.68); changing tastes in fish sauce (*Nat.* 31.95–6); and oysters and tortoises as things of luxury (*Nat.* 32.59, 63–4; 32.141).

Perhaps the most intriguing account of food and its relation to Roman cultural history is the *De Re Rustica* of Varro. This work dates to the early 30s BC and consists of three dialogues set at different points in recent Roman history (the second, for instance, is set in Epirus, where many wealthy Romans owned large estates, and takes place in 67 BC, when Varro himself held a command there in the war against the pirates). What gives these dialogues their

particular energy is the tension between moralizing accounts of moral decline and the realization that the best way for a farmer to turn a profit in the modern day is to cater to the markets opened up by that same decline. Nor does Varro spare himself: the preface to the second book includes the aviary (*ornithon*) among those rooms that pretentious modern Romans insist on knowing by their Greek names only for the third to feature the loving description of the aviary that he himself has built in his villa at Casinum (Var. *R.* 2 praef. 2, cf. 3.3.7, 3.5.8–17).

The conflict between morality and the profit-motive is most strikingly visible in the third book of the *De Re Rustica*. The dialogue is set in the Villa Publica on the Campus Martius and features a cast of Romans with strikingly avian names, who discuss how best to raise birds and other small creatures, while outside there reigns the chaos of an election for aedile. Here Varro meets Cornelius Merula (Blackbird), Fircellius Pavo (Peacock), Minucius Pica (Magpie), and Marcus Petronius Passer (Sparrow), and collectively they enter into dialogue with the Reatine senator Quintus Axius. This last figure is the only one apart from Varro whose *cognomen* does not suggest any species of bird. Instead it suggests the Greek adjective that we might translate as “Worthy” or here perhaps as “Worth.” For what Axius is keenest to know is exactly how he can make money out of this form of agriculture, and his interventions tend to redirect the dialogue to questions of profit.

In the first century BC there were few dinners more lavish than those held by the colleges of priests in order to mark the entry into their number of a new augur or flamen. Striking testimony to this practice is to be found in Macrobius (3.13.11–2), who quotes from the Fourth Digest of the Pontifex Maximus, Metellus Pius, describing the celebrations on August 22, 70 BC, of the inauguration of Lentulus as Flamen Martialis. Those in attendance supped on sea urchins, oysters, various forms of mussel, thrush on a bed of asparagus, fattened chicken, oysters, more mussels, clams, jellyfish, fig-peckers, loin of goat and of boar, more birds in pastry, more fig-peckers, and murex. And that was only the appetizer. For the main course they took in sow's udder, sow's cheek, duck, boiled teal, hare, fattened goose, fine meal, and Picentine bread. Macrobius decries the luxury of the performance (3.13.13) and it must be to just such events that Varro refers when Axius is told to look to public banquets, triumphs, and the innumerable dinners of the colleges as sources of particular profit (Var. *R.* 3.2.16), or when Merula records that it was at the dinner to mark his entry into the college of augurs that Q. Hortensius first served peacock (Var. *R.* 3.6.6). One tendency in this dialogue is to indict such dinners as a symptom of decline: it is on account of luxury that a banquet is held pretty much every day in the city (Var. *R.* 3.2.16); changes in the raising of birds, fish, bees, and hares are all part of the history of luxury at Rome (Var. *R.* 3.3.5–10, esp. 6 and 10); Hortensius' peacock was applauded by the luxurious but not by the upright and severe (Var. *R.* 3.6.6). This is perhaps the

more predictable tendency in the work and in harmony with the moralizing tendencies of so much Latin literature of the period. More surprising is the principle embodied by Axius and on which much of the explicit instruction on offer in the dialogue turns: luxury may be a very bad thing but it is also highly profitable for those who can cater to its demands: the thrush will sell for a healthy three denarii a head and the peacock for 50 (Var. *R.* 3.2.15; 3.6.3), so the producer contracted to supply a feast or a triumph is bound for riches (Var. *R.* 3.5.8). As an example of what can be achieved, Varro describes the thriving business of his aunt Fircellia on the Via Salaria between Reate and Rome, which brings in 60 000 sesterces every year from the sale of thrush (Var. *R.* 3.2.14–5; 3.4.1). This, as Axius has no trouble seeing, is serious money. Should he finally decide against these birds, a case is also made for the profitability of newly popular guinea-fowl (Var. *R.* 3.9.18–9) or of bees (Var. *R.* 3.16.10–11, 23).

Conclusion

The Romans had a clear sense of the hierarchy of genres. Epic and tragedy are the truly lofty forms and the gods, heroes, and kings who populate them are characteristically detached from questions as banal as what they can expect for lunch. Not so those lower genres – comedy, satire, epigram, and the novel – where all human life is on display. Horace talks of his *Satires* and *Epistles* as creeping through the earth (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.250–1 *sermones ... | repentis per humum*) and surely expects us to recall that man (*homo*) is made of earth (*humus*). It is Horace whom we will find sauntering through the vegetable market to buy his evening meal (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.111–8) or listening to his friend Ofellus discourse on the virtues of simple food (Hor. *Sat.* 2.2.116–22). If food has no place in tragedy save in the form of feasts so grotesque that they threaten the order of the cosmos, comedy abounds in chefs, their apparatus, and the ingredients they mean to cook. To the audience of comedy, there is nothing to be ashamed of in the savor of a good pork chop.

Food is also about human beings eating together. This is what makes it so central a feature of genres such as satire, where every form of social interaction is described. In the *Satyricon* the community of fellow-freedmen (*colliberti*) eat together and admire their host who, for all his wealth, still remains one of them; the men of culture (*scolastici*) who inveigle themselves into Trimalchio's dinner party may feel that their education and taste set them above their host and his friends; it is just a shame for Encolpius and Ascyltos that they are still too broke to avoid cadging food from him. In Juvenal *Satire* 5 the interaction is that of patron and client, and the question that the client must ask himself is whether access to free food is enough of an incentive to endure the sundry little humiliations that the mercilessly stratified dining arrangements bring to those at the bottom of the scale.

Finally food is also about being a part of Roman culture and wondering how things have changed so fast and where this change will lead. In all probability your grandfather never sat up to consume porridge or turnips from an earthenware bowl, but nor did he have the slightest idea that a man could recline on a silver couch and tuck into sow's udder, guinea-fowl, or tortoise. Each pose, implement, and dish is loaded with political and cultural associations, which feed into the big question of what the wealth of empire has brought to Rome. When conspicuous display becomes the norm and family fortunes are wasted on the expenditure that political competition demands, then not even empire can keep everyone afloat. That is when sumptuary laws are promulgated and cultural histories of luxury and its consequences composed. Food in Latin literature can be a very dangerous thing.

FURTHER READING

Gowers (1993) is the seminal work in this field and remains a fundamental point of reference. Gowers is particularly strong on the metaphorical and metaliterary aspects of food in Latin literature.

The Loeb Classical Library offers easily accessible editions of Ennius, Cato, Varro, Pliny the Elder, and Macrobius. In the case of Nepos and Fenestella, I continue to cite them according to the numbering of Peter (1893) because the fragments of the former on Roman dining habits are excluded from Cornell (2013).

There are helpful commentaries available on many of the more familiar texts cited. For Horace, *Satires* 2.4 and 2.8, see Muecke (1993). For Juvenal, *Satires* 3–5, see S. M. Braund (1996). For dining in Petronius, see Smith (1975).

For Roman comedy and the Atellane farce, Manuwald (2011) offers a reliable introduction and guide to further reading. For more specialized studies, see Lowe (1985) and Damon (1997).

CHAPTER 4

Cookery Books

Robin Nadeau

Why are we obsessed with food? Why do we buy recipe books and watch television cooking shows? Knowledge about food is a good way to impress guests, to show one's culture, one's tastes in cooking, in wine ... The modern word "gastronomy" derives from a book title attributed to Archestratus of Gela, a Greek author from Sicily in the fourth century BC (Ath. 4d–e, 56c¹). A large number of modern cookbooks even try to duplicate ancient tastes and recipes. In reality, we have access only to a few ancient recipes, and even with these it is almost impossible to know for sure what ancient dishes tasted like, since tastes and sensations are cultural (Montanari, 2010, 73–5). Ancient cookery books were very different from what we are used to now. The relationship between food and literature in antiquity was different from ours, despite the number of modern cookbooks² inspired by antiquity that have been published lately.

The study of cookery books is a unique way to approach food culture, but it is imperative to understand that cooking and gastronomy are culturally constructed. Cookery books cannot be considered objective descriptions of reality (Laurioux, 1996, 462–4, 473–6; Nadeau, 2015b). Although we have become obsessed with notions of origin and *terroir*, ancient cultures had a slightly different understanding of provenance (Montanari, 2010, 98–101). We have even devised legal proceedings that strictly regulate the geographical provenance and kind of dishes and ingredients. Heaven forbid that we confuse Yorkshire rhubarb with other kinds of rhubarb today! Regional specialties were well known in antiquity and were discussed by ancient authors such as Pliny the Elder and Athenaeus of Naucratis, but we must also be aware that it is often hard for us to verify the sayings of ancient authors.³ In the famous cookbook *Apicius*, we find recipes that imitate regional specialties. For instance, Liburnican oil (from Illyricum) can be duplicated so convincingly that no one will know the difference between the original and the fake, according to the author (1.4 [André] = 1.5 [Crocock & Grainger]) In fact, to tamper with flavors is the essence of ancient cooking, a habit criticized by Archestratus, who praises freshness and authenticity (Archestr. fr. 36, 46, 57⁴; Euphro fr. 10; Chrysipp. *Stoic.* SVF xxviii fr. 3; Petr. 69—70).

The vast majority of literary references to food that have come down to us have an obvious agenda. Modern readers navigate between the extreme simplicity of the Lacedaemonians or Socrates to the extreme indulgence of Hellenistic kings and wicked emperors in ancient literature (Hdt 9.82; Xen. *Mem.* 1.3.5; 3.14; Ath. 549a–551a; Suet. *Vit.* 15–17; Hist. Aug., *Heliogab.*

18–32; Collin-Bouffier, 2000, 196; Solier, 2006). In Greek and Roman literature, foreign foodstuffs are often considered signs of luxury. Undoubtedly, most foodstuffs available to the common people were produced locally. Imported goods were often perceived as badges of social and economic privilege. The arrival of Greek and Oriental cuisine and luxury in Rome after their defeat by Roman armies is a well-known topos in Latin literature (Plb. 31.25.2–8). However, Greece and the Near East had influenced Rome for ages, long before the second century BC (Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 43–5; Passet, 2011, 41–8). Major cities and imperial capitals such as Classical Athens and Imperial Rome were hubs of supra-regional exchanges that gave their inhabitants access to a wider range of local and foreign goods (see Curtis and Erdkamp in this volume). The belief that traditional local foods were signs of simplicity and authenticity is also an exaggeration that served philosophical and political purposes in Republican and Imperial Rome. Such arguments may attempt to limit spending and to ensure social and political stability, as demonstrated by the sumptuary laws adopted in Rome, starting in the fourth century BC (Passet, 2011, 49–73). Nevertheless, Roman aristocrats continued to live a lavish lifestyle, but within explicit and implicit codes of conduct that differentiated those who knew the fine line between easy living and vulgar luxury and those who did not. There are good and bad occasions to show wealth or restraint. All historical periods came with their own values and ideas about ideal conduct (Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 199–204; Passet, 2010, 2011, 219–22). On closer scrutiny, we find that many luxury products were locally produced. Varro’s aunt, for example, produced poultry at her villa only 24 miles from Rome (*R.R.* 3.2.14–16; Dubois-Pelerin, 2008, 89–93; Kron in this volume). Access to the best wine and luxury foodstuffs creates social distinctions. However, since eating anything more than a piece of bread or common vegetables can be represented as a sign of luxury and decadence in ancient literature, especially in many philosophical and religious/Christian works, we should remain skeptical about what really is a luxury product. A book such as *Apicius* would therefore appear to be a eulogy of pleasure to ancient critics. This is probably the reason why the *Apicius* cookbook was attributed to the famous glutton of the early Imperial era (Ath. 7a–c; André, 1974, xxv–xxix). In Tertullian’s time, “Apicius” could even be used as synonym for “cook” (Tert. *Apol.* 3.6). However, for a writer of late antiquity, when asceticism represented the ideal form of food consumption, eating tasty or fancy food is a sign of *gula*, appetite, especially in the eyes of Christian authors (Grimm, 1996).

We have to ask ourselves what the purpose of cookbooks in ancient cultures would have been, where illiteracy was widespread and cooking an activity practiced mainly by slaves attached to Greek and Roman households. The treatise attributed to Apicius is in fact far from being the oldest cookbook we know about. Recipes from Mesopotamia have also come down to us (see Lion in this volume). In contrast to *Apicius*, the Mesopotamian scribes give precise

lists of ingredients with quantities and sometimes an indication of cooking techniques to be used. These texts were written about 1600 BC in prose. However, in a culture such as ancient Mesopotamia, where the transmission of knowledge for a trade such as cooking would have been predominantly oral and where literature was mainly the monopoly of scribes, we have to ask ourselves why recipes were written down in the first place. Although we do not have a clear answer for the *Apicius* (infra), we have a better idea of the utility of written recipes in Mesopotamia. Since cooked dishes were ritually offered to gods, it was imperative to reproduce the recipes over and over again in exactly the same way, to ensure that the gods were always equally pleased. The recipes were therefore written down so that cooks could exactly reproduce the customary dishes offered to the gods. Consequently, cooks (perhaps the priests themselves?) could prepare the food the same way, over and over again (Bottéro, 1995b, 254; Grotanelli & Milano, 2004, 247). Similarly, in ancient Greece, the *nomoi*, sacred laws, not only prescribed how to perform sacrifices, but also specified the kind of animal to be offered to which divinity and, sometimes, the techniques of slaughtering and cooking to be used and how the meat would be distributed (Detienne & Vernant, 1989; Berthiaume, 1982, 45–59)⁵. Cookbooks such as *Apicius*, however, do not suggest a religious context and seldom give precise measures of ingredients, with the exception of medication for instance. These inconsistencies and the potential lack of a readership/users lead me to conjecture that the *Apicius* is probably more a note collection than an actual recipe book (infra). But why would anyone need written traces of recipes in the first place?

Cookbooks, as we know them today, are the result of many factors: mass production of books made possible by printing, general literacy, home cooking by amateur chefs, and the desire to possess precious objects (recipe books are often beautiful and expensive items). None of these factors, however, except perhaps the latter, applied to ancient Greece and Rome. In fact, such books would have been limited to just a few copies. But even if some scholars claim that *Apicius* was a cookbook for ancient cooks (Goody, 1982, 103; Grocock & Grainger, 2006, 70–2), anyone who could actually read it probably never went near a stove. Even if a wealthy individual or a maître d’ in a household might read a recipe aloud so that a skilled cook could reproduce it – a possibility that cannot be ruled out (Cic. *Ad fam.* 9.20.2), it is hard to imagine this happening regularly. Therefore, I do not believe that cookbooks had any significant impact in kitchens in antiquity (*contra* Dalby, 1996, 109, 112–14; Grocock & Grainger, 2006, 71).

In ancient Greece, where cooks were mostly household slaves, how could cuisine be a sign of high culture, as argued in Jack Goody’s model? (See Hitch (Anthropology) in this volume.) This may have been the case in Sicily, the so-called place of birth of Greek “haute cuisine,” under a regime such as the tyrants of Syracuse in the fourth century BC (Goody, 1982, 102–5; Collin-

Bouffier, 2000, 197–8; Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 207). However, without well-established facts and figures, we may not possess enough information to be entirely sure that cuisine indicated high culture. In preindustrial cultures, the majority of the population had to work hard to nourish their families and would have suffered from food shortages in frequent periods of scarcity. As Peter Garnsey once wrote: “in antiquity, food was power” (Garnsey, 1999, 33). Any person who could afford to do so might (or would) use food as a status marker. Modern readers seem to have the impression that because an expression such as the “art of cookery” is used to translate the words *opsartutike* (*techne*), *mageirike* (*techne*), and *opsartusia*, Greek cuisine was an art form similar to that performed by three-star Michelin chefs today. The word “*techne*” is certainly close to our concept of “craftsmanship,” but if the cook was a skilled worker who had to learn his trade as an apprentice under a master (Anaxipp. fr. 1; Euphro fr. 1; Posidipp. fr. 28; Sosip. fr. 1) that does not mean that he enjoyed high social standing (Nadeau, 2015b). Cooks in Greek comedy behave like great artists and intellectuals, but considering their social and working environment it is not easy to understand how cooking could achieve such prestige. In fact, we may have been fooled by the claims to greatness of comic chefs (Posidipp. fr. 28).

The chef is a stock character mainly in Middle and New comedy and is a comedic caricature of Greek intellectuals and chefs (Philem. fr. 1): doctors of the soul become doctors of the belly. A very important fact is often overlooked in secondary literature: philosophers and other intellectuals are wealthy men who do not need to learn a trade to make a living. In this context, knowledge becomes a hobby or a means to show high social status. A Greek cook might be free-born but had to learn a trade (*techne*) from someone in order to work and earn a living. The boastful chef of ancient comedy reduces intellectuals to a laughing stock: cooks are crooks. Therefore, I do not consider the claim that comedy cooks really attended culinary school as in our days to be accurate – just as Greek philosophers attended the Academy (although Sosip. fr. 1 may suggest otherwise: Grocock & Grainger, 2006, 40–2, 70). The mixture of attributes from real intellectuals and real chefs would have made the fictional comic cook a ridiculous but popular character.

One may also wonder how the marvels that comedy chefs attribute to themselves could reflect the way real cooks were perceived. The comic Alexis claimed that cooks were free-born (fr. 134; also Heracleides & Glaucus of Locris although quoted out of context: Ath. 661e; Petr. 70). In fact, very little of what is said about cooks in ancient comedy might be true (Wilkins, 2000a, 415; Garcia Soler, 2008; *contra* Curtis, 2012, 114). Of course, real chefs offered their services on the Athenian marketplace. Some could have exaggerated their skill in trying to convince potential employers and customers to hire them. However, besides the meat vendors, the hired-butcher in sacrificial rituals, and the caterers one might encounter in the marketplace

of big cities such as Athens, the *mageiroi*, the vast majority of cooks and domestics were household slaves – and perhaps wives and daughters in very poor households (D. Chr. 7.65–81; Berthiaume, 1982, 75–8; Dalby, 1996, 15–16). Head *mageiroi* could own slaves as assistant-cooks (Posidipp. fr. 25). Aristotle mentions that it was possible to pay to train slaves to become cooks and domestic servants in Syracuse (*Pol.* 1255b 25–7). In Rome, cooks would almost exclusively be slaves and would receive even less consideration (Cic. *Off.* 1.150).

The authors of cookery books were not cooks, professional or amateur. They were intellectuals passing on intellectual knowledge. The poetry of Epicharmus (fifth century) and Archestratus of Gela (fourth century) made Sicily the birthplace of the first works devoted to food in Greece, according to modern scholarship (for detailed analysis: Wilkins, 2000a; Olson & Sens, 2000; Wilkins & Hill, 2011). Mithaecus (end of the fifth century) is traditionally considered the first author of a cookbook in the secondary literature, since Plato first mentions his name in *Gorgias* (518b); the late tradition attributes a recipe to him, but it might be spurious (Ath. 325f; Dalby, 1996, 110). The first substantial cookery book is Archestratus' *Hedupatheia* (*Life of Luxury*). It is in fact a parody of epic poetry in which food replaces gods and heroes. Archestratus became (in)famous in antiquity because of all the bad publicity he received from the advocates of schools of thought that fought against pleasure and promoted frugality instead.

We know little about Sicilian literature and cooking outside Athenaeus' late second-/early third-century AD compilation (see Murray in this volume). Athenaeus lists 12 authors who wrote a cookery book (*Opsartutikon*) (Ath. 516c; also: Poll. 6.71). However, aside from late attestations, we have very little information about cookery books in ancient Greece and Rome (Nadeau, 2015b). It is not entirely certain what these books contained. Some may have recorded recipes, others perhaps not. As noted above, recipe books would have been not very useful in the Greco-Roman context, since cooks generally were trained slaves. The only remaining “cookbook” to come down to us, *Apicius*, gives few indications about quantities or the techniques to be used.

The *Apicius* cookbook seems to have been compiled around the fourth to fifth century AD. We do not know where it was written, nor do we know anything about the identity of the author(s). We do not know to whom it is addressed, or what its purpose was. It was attributed to a famous gourmet of the first century AD.⁶ Jerome of Stridon is the first author to acknowledge its existence (*Epist.* 33.3). The *Apicius* may be a late compilation of many different works from different periods (Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 208). In itself, the *Apicius* seldom reads like a cookbook that specifies the quantities of ingredients and cooking techniques to be used, but rather resembles lists or notes. The main explanation proposed for this economy of words and description is that skilled cooks do not need quantities and measurements to

be able to reproduce a dish from a mere list of ingredients.⁷ That would imply that some cooks, although almost exclusively of servile status, could write and read (Grocock & Grainger, 2006, 70–2). I do not believe that this would be normally the case (Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 2, 245–6; Nadeau, 2015b).

I do not see how cookbooks could have had a big impact on ancient cultures. We have to remember that books were very expensive to copy and to buy. Only very wealthy individuals could have owned their own “cookbook.” It may have been an *aide-mémoire* passed down from cook to cook within the kitchens at court later imitated in rich households, as in the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods (Tannahill, 1973, 181–4; Hyman & Hyman, 1996, 649), but this has not been proven for antiquity.⁸ In societies where technical knowledge was communicated mainly through oral transmission and apprenticeship, there seems to have been no real need for recipe books.⁹

Although only a few actual Greek and Roman recipes have been passed down to us from late sources such as Athenaeus and *Apicius*, Roman agricultural treatises and occasionally physicians also preserve recipes. With the exception of *Apicius*, almost all recipes that have come down to us are from authors who cannot be considered cooks and probably never laid hand on a frying pan. Some doctors suggest dishes that would restore the balance of healthy humors or ease digestion. The close relationship between cuisine and medicine is well known (Pl. *Grg.* 464d; Gal. *On the Powers of Foods*, 2.27). Dietetics was a branch of ancient medicine. A learned man could choose food and dishes that would produce a desired effect on his body (Cato *Agr.* 156–7, etc.; *Apicius* 1. 29 [André] = 1.27 [C & G]; 1. 39 [André] = 1.34 [C & G]; Gal. *On the Powers of Foods*, etc.). Latin authors, such as Cato the Elder, Virgil (in the *Georgics*), Varro, Columella (Book XII for instance), Pliny the Elder, Palladius, or the Apician corpus give advice to gentlemen farmers on how to manage their estates. They write about what to do with harvested foodstuffs in order to preserve them: to bake bread, cure meat, fish, conserve vegetables and fruits, salt hams, make wine, etc. Emphasis is placed on productivity and profitability. Notably, Columella gives exact measures of ingredients in his recipes. An author such as Pliny the Elder takes a scientific and encyclopedic approach to food as a worthy category of knowledge. Ranking foodstuffs – showcasing one’s erudition at the same time – becomes part of the scientific discourse. Pliny gives his opinion on the best wines and other ingredients (*censura culinarum*) in a scientific manner (Plin. *Nat.* 9.168–9; Book 14, etc.; Hor. *S.* 2.4; Tchernia & Brun, 1999, 22–3). Some wines keep better, others are prized for their taste or health benefits, and so on. To know the best wine is a way to display knowledge and good taste. Food and drinks were both an intellectual matter and a *techne*: intellectuals produced food for thought, and cooks for the belly.¹⁰

Even if we acknowledge the great literary achievements of the Greeks and Romans, we nonetheless have to put cookery books back into their literary

and social environment. There is no doubt that food became a category of knowledge in ancient Greece and Rome that was discussed in comedy, philosophy, rhetoric, and medicine. Food is discussed as a form of entertainment in poetry but also in scientific treatises. We even know of book titles that seem to be devoted to food (*Opsartutika*) according to Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*. But we know very little about the content of these treatises (Nadeau, 2015b). In this world of intellectual elites, whose accounts are more closely associated with the leisure class than with the “producers” and artisans, the relationship between scholarly treatises of sometimes unknown purposes and actual cooking is far from obvious.

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FURTHER READING

A new edition of *Apicius* translated into English is available (Grocock & Grainger, 2006). This is a fair English translation, but many assumptions found in the introduction are doubtful. The best works on Greek cookery books and Sicilian literary tradition are Olson & Sens (2000), Wilkins (2000a), and Wilkins & Hill (2011). On Sicilian literature and the first of the so-called “cookery books,” read Wilkins & Hill (1995) and Wilkins (2000a), chapter 7.

NOTES

- 1 On the titles of the work attributed to Archestratus of Gela, see Olson & Sens (2000) xxi–iv.
- 2 In modern English, a “cookbook” *is* a book of recipes. Ancient cookery books are books *about* cooking, and do not always imply a straight collection of recipes. Therefore, I use the term “cookery books” for books *about* cooking but “cookbooks” for books of recipes.
- 3 Today, for example, the designation “Champagne” should indicate very specifically the fizzy wines of the Champagne region, but this does not stop some American wine producers from using the name. For ancient times: Grottanelli & Milano (2004), 246.
- 4 Olson & Sens (2000).
- 5 In Rome: Scheid (2005).
- 6 The Greek grammarian Apion (first century AD) may have something to do with this: Ath. 294f.

- 7 Were “cookbooks” a way of promoting a Roman way of life, a tool for the Romanization of later Roman provinces? Were their intended audience people from peripheral regions who wanted to become more Roman, to eat Roman? On that matter, I would think that a rich member of the elite who would want to serve his guests Roman dishes and be considered “Romanophile” would simply acquire a cook trained in Rome. That would be one way to show his wealth. The importation of Roman food products into Britain during the Roman period might illustrate such attitudes (van der Veen, 2008).
- 8 In fact, the influence of such books was very limited in Europe until the seventeenth to eighteenth century.
- 9 Even in mid-nineteenth-century France, despite the development of literature, illiteracy was still common. In Zola’s *Le ventre de Paris* (1873), an apprentice learns the trade of butchery at an established butcher’s shop. The knowledge is transmitted orally and through on-hand practice, as it probably was in ancient Greece and Rome. See also Notaker (2012), 134.
- 10 For the sake of entertainment, the host could have his servants and cooks put on a theatrical performance: Plu. *Mor.* 711b–d; Petr. 49–50; Ath. 376c ff.; 381a ff.

CHAPTER 5

Medical Literature, Diet, and Health

John Wilkins

One of the contributors to this volume observes that “eating and drinking in the ancient world had greater significance than mere biological sustenance” (Pitts, [Chapter 9](#), first paragraph). While this is true of many social and cultural aspects of eating discussed in this collection, Galen would scarcely tolerate such a dismissal of biology. In Galen’s teaching, correct regulation of the complex biology of the tissues and organs of the body allowed the human animal to lead a healthy life in the ancient city. Good health was achieved by following the “necessary activities,” later known as Galen’s “non-naturals.” Galen tied the human animal into the cultural life of the Greco-Roman world, so that a person could remain healthy when at work, at home, asleep, and visiting major civic buildings and institutions such as bathing complexes, gymnasia, and festivals, as well as walking through the city streets and colonnades.

Eating and drinking were only one of the six necessary activities (along with breathing air, exercise, sleep, mental well-being, and “filling and emptying,” by which Galen meant balancing the humors); but they were the crucial activity that brought energy to a body depleted by respiration and exertion. Food and drink restored body heat, nutriments, and strength, but, because their assimilation into the tissues of flesh, organs, and bone marrow was imperfect, there was always a danger that the humors created might be unbalanced and produce a residue or *perittoma* (Galen, *De sanitate tuenda* (*On Maintaining Good Health*) 1.3; 5.25–6.26 CMG). Hence the need for advice from Galen to keep the body well balanced. The doctor could assess the particular nature of each individual and advise on how the six necessary activities should be modified accordingly. Tried and tested over many centuries, Galen’s Hippocratic system was tweaked by him for his own imperial world of the second century AD, and passed successfully to late antiquity (the summarizing medical writers Oribasius, Aetius of Amida, and Paul of Aegina); to the Syrian Christians; to the Arabs and the Islamic world (see Waines in this volume); to Byzantium (see Caseau in this volume); to the Latin West (see Laurioux in this volume); and to the Early Modern Period (see Wear, 2000). Biology was bigger than culture: our bodies are physiologically very similar to Roman bodies, and all the cultures mentioned above readily adapted themselves to Galen’s system. His humors were not precisely the same as those of the Chinese (see Sabban in this volume) and Ayurvedic systems, but very similar underlying principles of nature and balance within a holistic system applied.

From the earliest surviving Greek literature, the epics of Homer and the didactic poems of Hesiod, to late antiquity, writers reflect on the frailty of human beings. As mortal creatures, they are in need of the most basic provision, of food, clothes, and shelter. When called upon to exert themselves greatly, as on the battle fields of the *Iliad* for example, fatigue sets in rapidly, with the need for additional energy. Restorative drinks are supplied (11.620-45). When Socrates is establishing his ideal city, the provision of a healthy diet is an early consideration. It is ideally a vegetarian diet, which matches food supply to population so that the city can live at peace and not suffer the unlimited appetite of a “luxurious” city (Pl. *R.* 372b–e). Under the apparently well-provisioned Roman Empire, Galen identifies annual shortages of foods in the spring, which force country dwellers to move down the food chain to eat foods normally used as animal fodder. They eat the bitter vetch normally fed to cows, and the acorns that they stored originally for their pigs (*On the Powers of Foods* 1.29, 2.38).

Medical writers recognized at an early stage that nutrition was a key factor in good health. The Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine* (3) describes the ascent of humanity from short hungry lives eating the same food as animals to the civilized life of the city, where foods were cooked as needed, and food and medicine in partnership could keep the human body in good health. Human beings were forced to modify their animal diet, because fruits, fodder, and hay were less likely to satisfy their hunger than that of grazing animals. Human culture therefore distinguished human beings from animals, just as animal sacrifice established a hierarchy of the lowest kind of being, domesticated animals, raised and sacrificed by human beings in deference to the gods, the highest form of being, who controlled the natural forces of the cosmos.

For the Hippocratic author of *Regimen* II and III, as much as for Homer, fatigue (*kopos*) was in danger of overwhelming the body after heavy exercise, and the need for food to rebalance energy levels was urgent, but difficult to get right: “it is not possible to write about human regimen in such a precise way that exercise can be exactly proportionate to the quantity of food” (67–8).

How did the human body process this food, once it was cooked and prepared as needed? It was difficult to describe in the almost permanent absence of human dissection in antiquity, though the Alexandrian doctors Herophilus and Erasistratus did dissect and publish their work (von Staden, 1989), which is one reason why Galen has a much more comprehensive account of the body than do the Hippocratic doctors. Galen gives a good theoretical account of the processes of digestion in *On the Use of Parts*, Books 4 and 5. Food is cooked in kitchens and eaten at mealtimes, after which it is chewed and swallowed. It makes its way to the stomach. It is then digested, literally “cooked,” in the body’s heat and transformed into blood in the veins and liver, ready for distribution as humors (the four humors by Galen’s time, blood, yellow bile, black bile, phlegm) to all parts of the body. These humors needed to be in

balance in a healthy body, according to Pythagorean sources and nearly all doctors who followed them. This balance resembled the balance needed in a well-ordered city, according to Alcmaeon of Croton, fr. 24, a text heavily influenced by Pythagorean thought. To describe the physiological processes within the body, analogies were drawn with activities in the city, such as cooking and carpentry (in the Hp. *Regimen* 1.12–24). Galen compares the physiological distribution of nutriment with distribution of grain by city porters and water by aqueducts (*On the Use of Parts* 4). The doctors clearly made every effort to link their understanding of good health with the lifestyle of Greco-Roman culture, particularly in the areas of cooking food (which prepares human food ideally for the “cooking” of the digestive process) and in encouraging exercise and bathing before meals. (See Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 213–44 on how Galen’s physiology maps on to the modern understanding of digestion.)

By the late fifth century BC, the Hippocratic doctors were able to list the properties of foods in considerable detail, matching up external effects with probable effects inside the body. They also aimed to locate this process within the macrocosm of the universe, and within life in the city. Thus a healthy lifestyle could be described in which proper balancing of food intake, exercise at home or in the gym or walking in the streets, and bathing and massage could be integrated to maintain a healthy life.

This system, which is essentially the same as that detailed by Galen six centuries later, enabled the healthy person to live independently of the doctor, with only occasional need to take drugs or stronger remedies. The main aim was to maintain balance and avoid loss of control (*akrasia*) and excess (Gal. *On Maintaining Good Health* 5.1). To that extent, Galen agreed with philosophical disapproval of luxury and excess, on which see Scade in this volume.

A number of Hippocratic texts discuss diet within a healthy lifestyle, of which the most important are the four *Diaitai* or “*Regimens*,” *Nature of Man* and *Regimen in Acute Diseases*. These treatises discuss the foods normally consumed in the context of the heat and “humors” of the body, all with (varied) reference to the elements that make up the cosmos. Foods need to be balanced with exercise, and maintained with sleep and bathing in a healthy lifestyle that takes account of dreams, but cannot really be reconciled with the demands of working life. The author of the Hippocratic *Regimen* III declares (68) that “I shall write for the vast majority of men, the means of helping such as use any ordinary food and drink, the exercises that are absolutely necessary and the sea voyages required to collect the wherewithal to live” (transl. Jones). But he adds (69), “such is my advice to the great mass of mankind, who of necessity live a haphazard life without the chance of neglecting everything to concentrate on taking care of their health.” This is a diet for the leisured classes, as appears too in the regime of Diocles of Carystus, a near

contemporary of the Hippocratic writers, but not in Galen, who, as we shall see, writes about manual workers and farmers as well as leisured people about town.

To this gentle Hippocratic preventive medicine, two features were added in the Hellenistic period after the death of Alexander. In this new political world, kingdoms were established with wealthy kings to rule them. The Ptolemies were one such court, and contributed bodies of criminals for dissection, as noted above. Others developed the sciences of botany and pharmacology at their courts, partly through fear of poisoning. These medical studies provide much of the material that Galen uses in his pharmacology (*On Simple Medicines*). As we shall see, Galen adopts a version of the Hippocratic regime, while at the same time acting as court physician to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Like his predecessor monarchs Mithridates of Pontus and Nero (the Roman emperor), Marcus had huge stores of *theriac*, the antidote to all poisons (Gal. *Theriac to Piso*). Such was the efficacy of this complex drug that it could be a useful tonic for older (and wealthy) patients, Galen tells us in *On Maintaining Good Health*. (Theriac was still used in British pharmacy in the eighteenth century, known as “treacle.”)

Many works on food have undoubtedly been lost. Some are alluded to in the curious document known as Anonymous Londinensis. Spanning many centuries of medical theory, this document reveals further authors and a rather idiosyncratic approach to diet and medicine (IV.40–VII 20 Jones). Closer to Hippocrates is Diocles of Carystus, who seems to follow a medical system very similar to that of the Hippocratic authors, both in recommended style of healthy living and in attention to individual foodstuffs (e.g. fr. 176 and 193a van der Eijk), as also did Mnesitheus of Athens (Bertier, 1972). Both authors are quoted by Athenaeus (see Murray in this volume) for detailed assessments of the food value of fish and certain vegetables. In addition, only Athenaeus quotes from the work of Diphilus of Siphnos of the third century BC, who prescribed foods for the sick and the healthy (the latter presumably within a preventive regime), and from Hicesius (Gourevitch, 2000), who wrote on food materials. Athenaeus has no interest in medical theory, stripping it out of the passages of Diocles and Mnesitheus that he is quoting; but he does demonstrate the close relationship between medicine and the symposium. Galen is one of the semi-fictional guests at the symposium described by Athenaeus. Diners were interested in the medical properties of what they were eating, as is shown by the presence of doctors at many fictional symposia written by Plato, Lucian, Plutarch, and others. Athenaeus’ dry lists do not reveal a great deal, but to judge from his work and Plato’s inspired *Symposium*, we might conclude that medicine and nutrition were part philosophy and part the daily diet.

Philosophical systems were important also in the extensive works of Galen. Claiming to understand Hippocratic texts better than all his rivals in Rome in

the second century AD, Galen places food prominently in his medical system (*On the Powers of Foods* 1.1). He takes the classifications of foods further than *Regimen* II has done and adds to it a logical method and insistence on autopsy that make him a formidable authority. He tries to distinguish varieties of beans and wheats with the help of discussions with peasant farmers, at the same time as updating Plato's tripartite soul to locate emotion and desire firmly in the heart and liver respectively. Admirer of Plato though he was, Galen's system is firmly based in the tissues of the body rather than in Plato's ideal world of the forms. So too with taste and pleasure, which Plato distrusted as meretricious. Galen agreed to some extent, but he also saw clearly that what tasted good to the tongue would probably have a beneficial effect also when taken into the body (*On the Powers of Foods* 2.51).

Not that he disagreed with Plato for a moment on the question of self-control and temperance. Galen's nutritional works are notably non-judgmental but his more philosophical treatises lament excessive eating and drinking, and point to the essential role of moderation in all things (*The Affections and Errors of the Soul* 6). Thus, in the case of wine, it might be taken to excess and produce social ills, but it is also a powerful diuretic (remember that the Greeks and Romans lacked the big modern diuretics of tea and coffee) and while damaging to the young is beneficial to the old, helping to heat up their flagging body heat and produce good digestion of food into balanced humors (*The Soul's Dependence on the Body* 3; *On Maintaining Good Health* 5.5).

Galen's eagerness to update Hippocrates and Plato to his own time (some six centuries later) allows him to provide impressive data on how food figured in people's lives under the Roman Empire. Unlike many literary authors who lament the extravagance and luxury of the ruling elite and romanticize the life of poor simple folk (Juvenal's *Satires* and Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*, for example), Galen knew that many rural populations had too little to eat in the spring and might be forced to go down the food chain to eat the foods they normally fed to their animals. According to Galen, food shortages were endemic to the Roman Empire and the consequences for health were serious:

The food shortages that have frequently and for no few successive years befallen many of the subject peoples of the Romans have clearly shown to those who are not completely unthinking what power bad humor has in the generation of disease. For people living in towns, as it was their custom to prepare straightaway after the summer sufficient food for the whole year following, by taking from the countryside all the wheat along with the barley and the beans and lentils, left for the countrymen all the other grains, which they call pulses and legumes, after taking not a few of these too to the city. So these foods that were left to them the country people use up during the winter, and are forced to use foods productive of bad humor for the whole of the spring. They eat twigs and shoots of trees and bushes, and bulbs and roots of plants with bad juices and consume the so called

wild greens, whichever happens to be in good supply, without sparing until they are satisfied, just as they boiled and ate whole green grasses which they had never tasted, even to try them

(*On the Good and Bad Juices of Foods* 1; 389.2–390.9; 6.749–51 K).

Galen used extensive anecdotal material (Mattern, 2008), noting the effects of a vegetarian diet (*On the Powers of Foods* 1.25), of the need for the old to eat a little and often (*On Maintaining Good Health* 5.4), of the importance of toning up the stomach with astringent pears before the main courses rather than after (*On the Powers of Foods* 2.22), and of the unfortunate compulsion on working people to eat food prepared too rapidly because of the insistence of their hunger (*On the Powers of Foods* 1.2 and 1.7). These stories contribute to his evidence base and researched material along with detailed analysis of the texts of Hippocrates to provide all the data needed to distinguish true from apparent causes. All of this is based within a theoretical framework derived from Aristotelian teleology, which rules that Nature does nothing in vain and that what is natural is what is best for the body. Some of his arguments in this area are not self-evident, for it is difficult to define precisely how a person should live “in accordance with nature.” Part of the explanation lies in a person’s own, individual, nature. But nature more broadly defined is more elusive.

This extensive use of evidence provides rich material for social historians on the prevalence of food shortages, the harder life in country than town, the impact of inadequate diet, and the diet of the poor. The work of Peter Garnsey has recognized Galen’s contribution, as well as chastising him for damaging misunderstandings, particularly about female patients who were overlooked in Galen’s system and not well placed for healthy pregnancies in ancient theory (Garnsey, 1999). It is true that women barely appear in his treatise on preventive medicine (Garnsey, 1998; Flemming, 2000; Nutton, 2004), but Galen at least insists on breastfeeding babies wherever possible, and not for the moralizing reasons deployed by historians such as Tacitus. Human physiology needs foods as similar as possible to human tissue, Galen argues, so that assimilation of nourishment will be as complete as possible. The baby who has been fed from the mother’s blood supply in the womb most needs the mother’s milk, the food closest to its own substance (*On Maintaining Good Health* 1.7).

Like many ancient authors, Galen tends to omit mention of authors whose material he has used while censuring others he considers in error. Thus his identifications of plants and properties owes much to the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides, who was a better pharmacologist than Galen according to Scarborough & Nutton (1982). Galen’s censure of Asclepiades of Bithynia, meanwhile, is trenchant. Disliking the cosmology of the latter (particles rather than natural design), Galen implies that Asclepiades’ preventive regime was also defective, even though we know that in practical details it resembled

Galen's own program of preventive medicine in a number of ways. Food, drink, exercise, and bathing seem to have been as important to Asclepiades as to Galen, to judge from the summarizing account of Celsus *On Medicine* 1 (Jackson, 1993; Nutton, 2004).

Dietary advice, as Ludwig Edelstein has written (1967), remained important in ancient medicine throughout antiquity. This was gentle, sustaining medicine which kept people healthy within a regime that covered the six "necessary activities." Galen's medicine is sometimes dismissed, as Wootton (2006) has done, focusing on Galen's authority in the early modern period to explain the failure to apply lens technology to create the microscope and hence microbiology before the 1850s, and on Galen's prescription of bloodletting for feverish and other patients, which only made the condition worse in many cases. Whether or not Wootton is right, he ignores the enormous strength of Galen's preventive medicine, which constitutes (according to Galen) fifty percent of a doctor's work, alongside the fifty percent that constitutes therapy. In overlooking preventive medicine Wootton falls victim to the general blindness of Western (not to mention global) culture, which knows that World Health Organization statistics predict high levels of heart disease, obesity, and depression in all five continents in future decades, but takes few steps to rectify the problem. One solution would be for the patient to take control of his or her health and follow a healthy regime similar to Galen's six natural activities. These activities had to work in antiquity because doctors had few powerful remedies to hand; but they remain important in biomedicine, if patients are to lead a healthy life and reclaim control of their lives from the professionals. Galen's dietary prescriptions are in fact close to those advertised on the websites of general practitioners, and, as Nutton (2004) has observed, there is little in ancient nutrition to which a modern dietician would object.

From the Hippocratic doctors through to Galen and to late antiquity, whatever their theoretical differences, doctors tended to recommend what was balanced and natural. Later authors such as Oribasius (Grant, 1996) are heavily dependent on Galen but also draw on more sources than he quotes and offer a potentially different picture. The same could be said of the Arabic text of al Majusi (Ullmann, 1978, 98–102).

How does food work within this ancient system? Ancient medicine clearly bases itself closely on the flora and fauna of the Mediterranean World, with adaptations for other climates such as that of northern Europe in the work of Anthimus and elsewhere (Grant, 1996). The Hippocratic *Regimen* II and Galen's *On the Powers of Foods* (Grant, 2000; Powell, 2003) remain the most important texts that enumerate individual foods. They figure prominently in the work of Dalby (2003b), which evaluates all the foods of antiquity along with the main ancient sources. Barley is the primary food for the Hippocratic text, followed by the rarer cereal wheat, primitive wheats, beans and pulses,

meat (including dog, hare, hedgehog, and fox), fish, eggs, cheese, vegetables, and fruit. Many details are given, and there are many overlaps between dietary items given in this treatise, on nutrition, and foods prescribed in therapeutic treatises, where barley water may be needed for feverish conditions, or puppy meat for a particular need.

Galen's discussion covers similar foods, but with many more varieties of cereal and vegetable, and much more explanation of why something is the case: why barley is cooling; why vegetables pass slowly or quickly through the digestive tract; why certain foods promote the production of particular humors in the body. For example, grey mullets caught in estuaries or lakes are more likely to produce thick humors such as phlegm than those caught in the open sea; and birds and pigs raised in agricultural plains similarly produce more thick humor than their wild counterparts living in mountainous areas, because those in the plains led an easier and less energetic life. Climate and environmental factors are crucial, as the Hippocratic author would have agreed, had he wished to spell it out in similar detail. Galen is writing for an imperial world spanning the Mediterranean from Syria to Spain and Egypt to the Black Sea (Wilkins, 2007). He proudly deploys rabbits from Spain and jujubes from Syria that were not included in the Aegean world of the Hippocratic author, adding wood bugs, camels, and panthers as undesirable foods eaten in Egypt and elsewhere but not in the Greco-Roman heartlands. In both the Hippocratic and Galenic texts, the foods reflect the cultural assumptions of the wider society, as we would expect. Galen, for all his championing of Hippocrates, does not accept *Regimen I* as a genuine text at all, and has his doubts even about *Regimen II*, preferring to quote from the enigmatic *Nutriments* in the Hippocratic corpus, to the effect that foods have drug-like qualities that may be beneficial or otherwise.

Galen divides foods, which nourish, from drugs, which produce change. This is a key definition (derived from Hippocratic medicine) in *On the Powers of Foods* and in its parent treatise, *On Simple Medicines* (Galen's principal text on pharmacology). When classifying foods in the former volume, Galen begins with the most nourishing cereals and beans in the first book, the most nourishing fruits and vegetables in the second and the most nourishing meats and fish in the third, noting along the way other properties each food might have. It may for example be warming (that is increasing the body heat), which is potentially productive of change in the body, hence technically a drug. This is most evident in the second book on green plants, where few foods are said to be nourishing (that is, in modern scientific terms, of calorific value), while most have useful properties for the passage of food through the body and many potentially produce change, such as the plants of the hedgerow that peasants have to eat in the spring to the great disadvantage of their skin and general health.

Distinctions between foods and drugs were clear to Galen. Ancient drugs were

based on the normal foods of the daily diet to a much greater degree than is the case in the twenty-first century, where active properties are isolated and sold as medicines far removed from the familiar foods on the family table. For ancient doctors, garlic was a food and a drug, as was barley, the drug being a stronger version that was needed for therapy once the preventive regime had failed to work.

It was essential to fit the nutritional benefits within the broader program of preventive medicine, as Galen sets out in *De sanitate tuenda* (*On Maintaining Good Health*) (Grimaudo, 2008). Here, the healthy person can maintain his or her health by eating standard elements of the diet along with such imports as pepper, cinnamon, and ginger if they can be afforded. In general, such spices should not be needed, if people rely on such items as barley, wine, and honey, which will certainly do good, if eaten in moderation, a notion the doctors share with most ancient thinkers and writers. The doctors assume a cereal and pulse staple in the diet, with less use of meat and fish than the modern world would countenance. These are not eaten every day by most people, but are tasty supplements. Age is an important consideration in Galen's preventive medicine, with the old in particular in need of wine to stimulate the kidneys and other mechanisms that detoxify the blood, and less bread and meat, which are liable to produce thick humor. Children, conversely, need milk (not wine) and a regulated regime to accustom them to the healthy diet that will see them safely through life without premature aging.

If this balanced health cannot be fully maintained, the patient might need to study Galen's treatise on *Good and Bad Juices*, and take advice too from *On the Thinning Diet*, in which plants and other foods are classified according to their ability to dispel thick humors, such as wealthy citizens might suffer after a diet based on wheat and pork, two traditional mainstays of the Roman diet. In this treatise, garlic and onions are the best plants for "cutting through" thick humors. Other green plants and fruits are also important, for, while providing little "nutrition" (or "calorific value"), they help the body to process more calorific foods. Such plants may also provide supplements that might "change" the body, as a mild drug might do. While Galen has no knowledge of vitamins and dietary trace minerals as now understood, these "less nutritious" plants bring additional properties essential for a balanced diet.

Assessments of the efficacy of ancient nutrition give conflicting evidence. On the negative side, Garnsey (1999) summarizes a number of studies that found signs of malnutrition in skeletons from antiquity, female skeletons in particular. The evidence is taken from tooth samples, the skull, and elsewhere. Conversely, Griffin and Pitts (2012) have shown, on the basis of dental analysis, that people who died at Poundbury in Dorset (UK) had better health if they were part of the Roman elite in Britain than if they were not. Roman civilization did indeed bring health benefits to some, it appears.

Galen has figured largely in this account of nutrition because he offers an

updated version of the Hippocratic diet, which is a flexible system that could be easily adapted and passed on to Arabic culture, the Middle Ages, or the Early Modern period, or indeed to our own century. This optimistic and humane system has something to offer modern medicine I believe, namely a way for the individual citizen to live a healthy life largely independent of the doctor, according to the six necessary activities, thereby reducing the need for strong interventions from drugs or surgery.

FURTHER READING

The best starting point on ancient nutrition is the work of Garnsey (1999), which gives a good modern perspective. Ancient authors and their perspectives are discussed by Wilkins *et al.* (1995: chapters by V. Nutton, E. Craik, M. Grant and H. King) and Wilkins & Hill (2006, Chapter 7). A good historical overview is provided by Edelstein (1967) and Wörhle (1990), while the philosophical background is treated by Grimaudo (2008). The main texts are translated by Grant (2000) and Powell (2003).

CHAPTER 6

Food and Ancient Philosophy

Paul Scade

Philosophers in the ancient world had a range of reasons for being interested in food. On the one hand, the nutritive capacity of food provided an interesting context within which thinkers could address physical and biological questions. Analysis of the nature of food provided an important way for some philosophers to consider the physical structure of types of object that even now are amongst the most familiar to human experience. Similarly, accounts of generation and decay, growth and diminution, in the cosmos take human and animal development and growth as important paradigms for understanding the kinds of physical condition that lead to growth as well as the underlying metaphysical parameters. On a more practical level, philosophers with an interest in biology were interested not just in the principles involved but also in the biological mechanisms of digestion and the manner in which food is processed by the body.

Thought in these areas can be broadly classified in terms of a desire for knowledge of *the nature of food*. A second direction of approach to the subject concerns views on the proper *attitude* that humans should hold towards food, and this approach will provide the focus for the present chapter. Whilst the physical nature of food often feeds into ethical views concerning attitudes towards food, the concerns in each area, as well as the philosophical tone in which discussions are presented, differ radically. The study of food as a part of the physical world is broadly value neutral, but in the ancient world, as now, discussion about the appropriate mindset one should take towards the eating of food tends to be more dramatic and forceful, as befits its location within a discourse concerning ethical values.

In general, we can classify most ancient ethical approaches towards the consumption of food as “minimalist.” This is to say that the primary concern of most writers when approaching the topic was to argue that there is no need for humans to indulge themselves in large quantities or wide varieties of food; all that one needs for a happy human life is, at most, a basic minimum of sustenance and a small variety of foodstuffs. This attitude is frequently associated with the view that the desire for great quantity or variety constitutes a moral failing. The vices of greed and overindulgence are often illustrated by reference to food (although these moral failings have a broader scope and take in other acquisitive desires, such as an excessive desire for wealth, possessions, or sex, as well). Greed stems either from the overcoming of rationality by irrational desires or from a failure of rationality leading to mistakes in judgment. In either case the problem is one of indulging

unnecessary wants. Part of the process of ethical development will, then, involve developing the correct attitude both towards food as sustenance and towards food as a source of pleasure.

Food, Virtue, and Sufficiency

Almost all ancient philosophers held that the human end is happiness (*eudaimonia*). Two important points of debate inform much ancient ethical thought and also determine the attitudes of their partisans towards food. First, we have a debate over whether the route to happiness involves a life of pleasure or of virtue. The majority of ancient thinkers, by head count and by influence, fall into the second camp, although there are some important exceptions (most notably the Epicureans, who developed powerful arguments in favor of hedonism and whose arguments very often revolve around attitudes towards food). Second, amongst those thinkers who identify the virtuous life with the happy life there are differences over whether virtue is sufficient for happiness or whether the happy life requires both virtue and external goods, such as food and sensory pleasure. I will begin by discussing the views on either side of this second debate first, before going on to examine an interesting related question about the place of taste within the moral philosophy of some of these thinkers. I will then turn to examine the position on pleasure held by the Epicureans before locating this position within the context of other ancient views on hedonism.

The debate between the view that virtue is sufficient for happiness (held, for example, by Socrates, according to many accounts; by Plato, in at least some of his dialogues; and most emphatically by the Stoics) and the claim that other goods, in addition to virtue, are necessary for the happy life (advanced by Aristotle and his followers) was extremely prominent in ancient philosophical discourse. Where philosophers stood on this issue was very important in guiding how they approached the topic of food. If one thinks, as the Stoics did, that the virtuous man will be happy even on the rack, or when dying of starvation, then the ultimate object of the philosophical life will not include, as an absolute aim, even a basic subsistence diet, aimed at removing the pain of hunger or even at sustaining life. Virtue is the only good and, as Seneca writes, “Food has nothing to do with virtue” (Epistle 88.31; cf. 92.10). This is not to say, however, that food was completely irrelevant to such thinkers. The Stoics, for example, see the desire for food as naturally appropriate for all living beings. Humans and animals, they claim, are constituted by god to seek their own preservation and, as such, will naturally seek out food.

Food maintains a high degree of philosophical importance from another perspective in that desire for food is presented by many thinkers as having the potential for moral danger. Indeed, this negative approach provides the most common context for the discussion of food by ancient thinkers. The potential

moral danger is, broadly, that the desire for the pleasurable experiences of eating and drinking may, when mistaken for genuine goods, corrupt one's actions and lead one away from virtue and into vice. The Stoics are notoriously extreme in their attitude to the extirpation of such mistaken desires (which they view as rational but erroneous, in contrast to the Platonic view, which would locate these desires in the irrational part of the soul), but a related approach towards what is portrayed as indulgence in food can be detected in many thinkers.

The figure of Socrates provides the most influential ancient paradigm of the abstemious philosopher, and many later schools of thought (frequently, but not always, founded by his disciples or his disciples' own followers) appear to base their attitude towards food on his example. Socrates is frequently presented as possessed of an almost superhuman hardiness, as a man who not only wandered the streets of Athens with bare feet but who also campaigned with the Athenian army in winter similarly shod and wearing nothing more than a light cloak. This physical endurance is emphasized as an outward manifestation of his strength of character and also extends to his attitudes towards food. Alcibiades, speaking as a character in Plato's *Symposium*, has the following to say about campaigning with Socrates:

When we were cut off from our supplies, as often happens in the field, no one else stood up to hunger as well as he did. And yet he was the one man who could really enjoy a feast; and though he didn't much want to drink, when he had to he could drink the best of us under the table. Still, and most amazingly, no one ever saw him drunk.

(*Symp.* 219e–220a, trans. Nehamas & Woodruff)

Whilst Socrates is portrayed here as enjoying feasts, the features echoed by most of the thinkers who were to self-consciously model their thought on his example were the ascetic elements, the ability to do without, and the notion of a character so strong that it remained steady even under the effect of large quantities of wine. In addition to the Stoics, whose views on the sufficiency of virtue for happiness can be traced back to representations of Socrates (see, in particular, Plato's *Crito*) and who interpreted his self-denial as a recognition that true value lies only in virtue, this Socratic example can also be seen to have affected the attitude towards food, and towards life in general, of the Cynic school of philosophy.

The precise relationship between the origins of Cynic thought and Socrates are not entirely clear. Commentators in the ancient world made much of the thematic connections between the two and identified Antisthenes, one of Socrates' disciples, as the first Cynic (a notable comment attributed to Antisthenes is "I would rather be mad than feel pleasure" (D.L. 6.3; for passages taken from Diogenes Laertius I follow Hicks' translation)), although it is now broadly accepted that the origins of the school lie with Diogenes of

Sinope (described as a “Socrates gone mad” in one source (D.L. 6.54)). Cynic thought centered around freeing oneself from the burdens of social convention and living a self-sufficient life in agreement with nature. The stories recorded about Diogenes may not all be true, but they vividly illustrate how one might seek to simplify one’s life, being happy with the barest minimum, and many of these stories revolve around his attitudes towards food. One of the core Cynic ideas was that nature was sufficiently bountiful to supply all that men could need, without it being necessary to engage in organized labor. Diogenes lived on what he could find, hunt, scavenge, or beg, and by actively seeking not just to reduce his food needs but also to simplify his methods of eating and drinking he thought that he would free himself from some of the most fundamental social conventions revolving around the production and consumption of food. One story claims that Diogenes’ attempts to live naturally went so far as to include an experiment in eating raw meat, although this had to be abandoned since he found he was unable to digest it (D.L. 6.34). Another famous story recounts that Diogenes had initially reduced his possessions to just a cloak, staff, leather pouch, and cup, but on seeing a child drinking out of cupped hands he discarded his own cup as unnecessary. Similarly, on seeing someone use a piece of bread as a trencher he discarded his bowl. Cynic philosophy was to have an important influence on Stoicism, the dominant philosophy of the Hellenistic and Roman periods (although the Stoics also pick up on the Socratic ideal of self-sufficiency from other sources). Whilst the Stoics are far less demonstrative than Diogenes in living a life in accordance with nature but free from convention, their attitude towards food is, if anything, even more extreme in its minimalism. They hold that even the impulse to eat, which accords with nature, is ultimately of no moral value and must be set aside when it conflicts with the demands of virtue.

Aristotle differed from thinkers such as the Stoics in holding that, whilst virtue is necessary for happiness, it is not sufficient. For Aristotle the happy life must include a range of other goods in addition to that of virtue, but he still rejects the life that associates happiness with pleasure (*NE* 1095b). This is a life, he contends, that, despite the widespread human commitment to it at all levels of society, is only fit for beasts. However, his rejection of pleasure as the end is not a rejection of bodily pleasure in the same absolute sense as is implied in theories centered on the sufficiency of virtue. For Aristotle, virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency, and he claims that in all areas, including diet, one should seek the mean that is relative to oneself. This is distinguished from the arithmetical mean, a point that he illustrates by reference to food (*NE* 1106a36–1106b2). The correct dietary approach will, then, involve eating the amount that is appropriate for oneself, consuming neither too much nor too little. Aristotle does not identify a single science of philosophy that will be able to establish the mean in all areas; rather, there will be as many sciences as there are areas of study, and he considers the

science concerned with moderation in diet to be medicine (*NE* 1096a29–35). In addition, moderately partaking of pleasures forms a constituent part of moral excellence, and so the person with the highest type of character will approach food both as a source of pleasure and as a source of sustenance, seeking in each case the right balance between excess and deficiency in quantity and pleasurable indulgence.

This position leads Aristotle to be as wary of the dangers of pleasure as are the other, more austere, thinkers. In the case of pleasure there is, he thinks, a natural tendency for humans to get carried away, and so he recommends a surprising solution: rather than immediately aiming for the mean, “We should drag ourselves to the contrary extreme; for we shall get into the intermediate state by drawing well away from error, as people do in straightening sticks that are bent” (*NE* 1109b3–6, trans. Ross). It is by pursuing an approach that compensates for our excessive desire for pleasure that we shall best be able to eventually hit the mean.

Taste, Perception, and Ethical Models

An interesting contrast can be drawn between the approaches taken by both Plato and the Stoics towards the faculties of sight and hearing, on the one hand, and taste, on the other. Plato famously associates the sight of the order and regularity of the heavenly bodies with the inculcation of order and ethical value in the soul. Sight is given to us by god, Plato’s speaker Timaeus claims (*Tim.* 47a–c), so that we might model ourselves on the cosmic order.

Similarly, hearing was given both for understanding speech and so that the harmony and order in music might be comprehended by, and reproduced in the soul of, the listener (*Tim.* 47c–e). Timaeus has nothing to say about any parallel ethical value for the sense of taste. Rather, he explicitly excludes the pursuit of “irrational pleasure” in music from the proper uses of hearing, and it is sensory pleasure with which he associates taste a little later in the dialogue.

The pleasure that follows from eating sweet food is identified with the “relaxation” of the organ of taste back to a natural state (see *Tim.* 60b and 66c), in line with the general idea that pleasurable sensations consist in a rapid return to a normal state after a disturbance (cf. *Tim.* 65d–e on bitterness, sourness, and saltiness, all consisting in other responses of the tongue to the physical constituents of foodstuffs). Wine, on the other hand, has its effect in a slightly different way. It is said to warm the body and soul, with this warming following from its fiery elemental make-up and being associated with physical change. Whilst sight and hearing also each have a physical basis, there is a contrast to be drawn here in that these senses are said to have an effect at the level of the rational, immortal soul. They transmit data on the intelligible reality of the world, leading to an understanding and modeling of abstract

order. Taste, on the other hand, is firmly bound to perception of the physical world, the ever-changing world of becoming, which is an inferior and morally corrupt copy of the intelligible realm of being. As such, taste pertains to the mortal part of the soul (*Tim.* 61c–d), the part which must be overcome in order to live a happy life. Taste occurs entirely by reference to direct interaction *with* the physical world and not by experience of the abstract patterns that might be *conveyed through* a physical medium (the sense of smell is grounded in the same way as that of taste, see *Tim.* 66d–67a).

Now, one might well think that Plato has missed a trick here, for there seems to be no good philosophical reason to deny that our experiences of taste and smell can convey similar structures of order, harmony, and regularity as can hearing and sight (such views have been expounded in other, non-Greek, philosophical systems – one might consider, for instance, the harmonization of flavors aimed at in the Japanese Zen Buddhist form of cookery known as *shōjin-ryōri*). That the Stoics follow Plato in this relatively negative view of food, despite rejecting his distinction between the physical and intelligible realms and between the rational and irrational parts of the soul, suggests that the philosophical approaches towards taste reflect a deep-seated antipathy towards food in the philosophical culture that identified itself as following on from Socrates. In a passage reporting Stoic thought that draws heavily on the *Timaeus*’ account of the value of sight and hearing, Cicero, having lauded the refinement of these senses in humans, goes on:

Likewise the nostrils, the taste, and in some measure the touch have highly sensitive faculties of discrimination. And the arts invented to appeal to and indulge these senses are ever more numerous than I could wish. The development of perfumery and cookery and of the meretricious adornment of the person are obvious examples.

(*De Natura Deorum* 2.146, trans. Rackham)

This asymmetrical approach to the ethical value of the senses was picked up on by opponents of Platonic and Stoic thought. The Epicurean Philodemus, for instance, repeatedly mocked the idea that music could ethically inform the soul precisely by pointing out that if this view is to be held consistently then the same analysis should apply to the arts proper to the other senses, including cookery (*De Musica* Cols. 91–2, 98, 112, 134 Delattre), and the criticism certainly seems valid. Whilst the Epicureans did not advance such a position themselves, they did take a much more positive attitude towards food than those schools that saw pleasure primarily in terms of a threat to the virtuous life.

Pleasure and Indulgence

The Epicureans depart from the main lines of ancient thought surveyed above in that, as hedonists, they identify happiness with pleasure (including sensory

pleasures) and are, therefore, lacking some of the philosophical motivations that lead to a suspicion of the desire for the pleasurable. The difference between the Epicureans and other thinkers in the ancient world in this respect is so marked that the name of their sect is even now linked with sensory pleasure, and in particular the pleasures that follow from a devotion to good food. However, whilst the Epicureans certainly are distinguishable from their fellows on these grounds, it is important not to draw too sharp a distinction, for Epicurean hedonism was a very restrained type of hedonism indeed.

The end in life for the Epicureans is pleasure but, crucially, pleasure is defined negatively as freedom from pain (*ataraxia* – tranquility or freedom from psychic disturbance, and *aponia* – freedom from bodily pain). As soon as this is recognized, the idea of Epicureanism as a wanton and decadent philosophy begins to recede. Food and drink are sources of pleasure in two different ways and these two types of pleasure have distinct statuses in Epicurean thought. Firstly, the Epicureans identify a class of pleasures they call *katastematic*, which are the pleasures that consist in being in a state of the absence of pain (with reference to any particular pain). The classic example is not being thirsty: thirst is a bodily pain and the absence of thirst is, thus, a desirable and pleasurable state. This type of pleasure is the most important to the Epicureans, as these pleasures provide, collectively, the end that should be aimed at, a state of being in which one is subject to no pains at all.

The second type of pleasure is not quite so central, although it is by no means negligible. These are the *kinetic* pleasures, the pleasures that are found in processes and that last only as long as the movement with which they are associated. In contrast to the *katastematic* pleasure of quenched thirst the Epicureans distinguish the kinetic pleasure that comes with the act of drinking when thirsty (Cicero, *De Finibus* 2.9–10) but which ceases when one stops drinking. So, certain temporary kinetic pleasures are to be found in the acts that lead to static pleasures, and since the need for food and drink are two of the most basic bodily pains to be overcome both the process and state involved with the satiation of these needs are of vital importance to the Epicureans. However, Epicurean attitudes towards food are considerably richer than this basic sketch might suggest, for they also address the question of *what* foods and drinks are needed to achieve the end, what attitudes one should take to different types of food and drink, and also what the pleasures of gastronomy can add to the happy life.

It is important to note that pleasure and pain are binary opposites for the Epicureans – the definition of pleasure as the absence of pain leaves no room for a continuum of pleurability, since when one is in a state of pleasure it cannot be increased as there is no more pain to remove: “The pleasure in the flesh is not increased, when once that which causes pain is removed, only varied” (Epicurus, *Key Doctrine* 18). Unrestrained feasting will not, then, serve to increase pleasure in proportion to the quantity consumed, since when

the appetite has been sated and one has achieved a state of pleasure there is no *greater* pleasure to be gained from eating.

Mental pleasures are partly derivative of the physical ones. For example, the *expectation* of maintaining a state of physical pleasure is a mental pleasure. The expectation that one will not go hungry or thirsty removes the mental pain of concern about future bodily pains. Moreover, *reflection* on kinetic pleasures, such as the pleasures of eating and drinking, is itself a kinetic mental pleasure, and the joy (*chara*) that comes from the mental reflection on past pleasures and the anticipation of future pleasures can serve to counterbalance present pains that cannot be removed (this is illustrated in Epicurus' deathbed letter (D.L. 10.22), wherein he notes that the intense physical pains of his illness have set in but he is still able to remain happy because he can draw on his stock of pleasurable memories). Whilst a diet of bread and water may serve for achieving the physical pleasure that is attendant on the removal of hunger and thirst, varying the kinetic pleasures by which one achieves this state, through consuming more varied or elaborate foodstuffs, increases one's store of materials to draw on for the generation of kinetic mental pleasures to balance out the presence of unavoidable pains. What many other philosophical schools would consider to be indulgence has, then, for the Epicureans a very real potential value. Yet still, Epicurus counsels against the dangers of overindulgence, for in certain respects this is as potentially damaging to an Epicurean thinker as it is for a Stoic or Platonist.

The Epicureans make a threefold distinction amongst types of desire, into those that are natural and necessary, those that are natural but unnecessary, and those that are unnatural and unnecessary. Natural and necessary desires, such as the desire for food, drink, or warmth, are the most fundamental and lead to static pleasure through the removal of pain. Desires that are natural but unnecessary also lead to a removal of pain, which is why they are natural, but they do so through specific routes that are nonessential. The desire to quench one's thirst is natural and necessary, whilst the desire to quench one's thirst specifically by drinking a fine wine is natural, due to the state it leads to, but unnecessary, as thirst can be quenched in many other ways. Unnatural and unnecessary desires are desires that do not lead to the removal of pains but, rather, may lead to their increase, such as a desire for political power or honors.

As has been seen, the varying of one's kinetic pleasures is a powerful tool for helping to secure future happiness. However, there is a degree of tension here, as the pursuit of kinetic pleasures may lead one into pain if not approached prudently. If I am hungry and I eat a chocolate bar I can sate my hunger and thus achieve an important static pleasure, whilst at the same time experiencing a kinetic sensory pleasure. If I eat a second chocolate bar I may gain some additional kinetic pleasure from the sensory experience, making the action

potentially worthwhile. But if I eat eight chocolate bars the prolongation of the kinetic pleasure has to be balanced against the likelihood that I will make myself rather sick and thus induce unnecessary pains. What is needed, then, is a “hedonistic calculus,” whereby one weighs up the potential pleasures and pains from any action to determine the optimal course (one might, for instance, choose to undergo a present pain, such as a medical operation, in order to achieve a future pleasure, a trouble-free body). So, the approach to pleasures, and this applies in particular to the pleasures of food and drink, must be led by reason and not by the untrammelled pull of the senses.

The Epicureans fall back into line somewhat with other ancient schools in that, whilst the pleasures of food and drink have value, the most fundamental pleasures, the *katastematic* pleasures, are best secured by adopting a minimalist approach to one’s needs. If one feels the *need* for fine wines or luxurious foods then one is setting oneself up for a fall by increasing the potential for pain in one’s life if these needs cannot be fulfilled. The right approach is to maximize one’s self-sufficiency by minimizing one’s needs. Epicurus summarizes his position in his *Letter to Menoeceus*:

We also regard self-sufficiency as a great good, not with the aim of always living off little, but to enable us to live off little if we do not have much, in the genuine conviction that they derive the greatest pleasure from luxury who need it least, and that everything natural is easy to procure. Plain flavours produce pleasure equal to an expensive diet whenever all the pain of need has been removed; and bread and water generate the highest pleasure whenever they are taken by one who needs them. Therefore the habit of simple and inexpensive diet maximises health and makes a man energetic in facing the necessary business of daily life; it also strengthens our character when we encounter luxuries from time to time, and emboldens us in the face of fortune ... For what produces the pleasant life is not continuous drinking and parties or pederasty and womanising or the enjoyment of fish and the other dishes of an expensive table, but sober reasoning which tracks down the causes of every choice and avoidance, and which banishes the opinions that beset souls with the greatest confusion.

(130–32, trans. Long & Sedley)

This rather austere hedonism ends up, then, looking less different from the minimalist approaches to food of other philosophical schools than one might initially expect.

The Epicurean position can be contrasted with the more full-blooded hedonism of Aristippus and his followers in the Cyrenaic school, who developed his thought into a philosophical system. Aristippus was a disciple of Socrates, and the many stories about his life (most of which are probably reflective of his philosophy rather than being historically authentic) provide an

interesting contrast to the moralizing tone adopted by many of Socrates' other followers. Unfortunately, little survives of his own doctrines, but the anecdotes told about him indicate a very strong rejection of the emphasis on self-control adopted by many of his contemporaries. For instance:

To one who boasted that he could drink a great deal without getting drunk, his rejoinder was, "And so can a mule."

(D.L. 2.72)

Diogenes, washing the dirt from his vegetables, saw him passing and jeered at him in these terms, "If you had learnt to make these your diet, you would not have paid court to kings," to which his rejoinder was, "And if you knew how to associate with men, you would not be washing vegetables."

(D.L. 2.68)

Cyrenaic hedonism had no truck with the moderation of Epicurean thought. For them, pleasure is itself the end, and happiness is conceived of as the sum total of all particular pleasures. Happiness is desirable for the sake of pleasure, whilst particular pleasures are desirable for their own sake. This difference with Epicureanism is emphasized by the Cyrenaic denial that lack of pain is a real pleasure, their assertion that bodily pleasures are superior to mental pleasures, and that the memory and expectation of past and future pleasures has no value. The Cyrenaics also deny that any hedonistic calculus is applicable – what is important is pleasure *now* regardless of the possible future pain that it may bring.

The Cyrenaics, then, stand in stark contrast to the main lines of ancient thought on food and pleasure, for food is to be indulged in and every pleasure is to be grasped at the moment it becomes available. There is a reflection here of the one aspect of Socrates' character in Alcibiades' description that is not picked up on by most of Socrates' followers: his pleasure in the feast. But in picking up on this theme and making it central to their thought, the Cyrenaics are very much the exception rather than the rule. The most popular and influential schools in antiquity encouraged an approach to food that mirrors the minimalist aspects of Socrates' character, and in so doing they agreed with the prevailing popular morality of the times. The general ancient approach to the morality of indulgence in food is one from which we are still not entirely free.

FURTHER READING

Ancient vegetarianism in the Greco-Roman is discussed by Dombrowski (1984) and in the more global context of the ancient world by Muers & Grumett (2008) and Finn (2009). Christian asceticism is analyzed in depth by Grimm (1996) and McGowan (1999). For an up-to-date overview of ancient

dietetics, see Beer (2010).

CHAPTER 7

Food, Gender, and Sexuality¹

Florence Dupont

Gender and Sexuality in Antiquity: Some Landmarks

The questions posed by anthropologists on the connections between food, sexuality, and gender distinctions in a civilization have traditionally been the following (Counhian & Kaplan, 1998; Counhian, 1999): what role do the production of food – agriculture, hunting, and gathering, its preservation, its preparation – cooking, and its consumption – eating and diet – play in the construction of gender identities? The domain of food is one where it is possible to sketch out social phenomena in totality by focusing, in different cultures, on one or another of these processes. Distinctions of gender and/or sexuality can form one or the other of these poles.

The reference work in this field is that of Yvonne Verdier (1979); the author discusses the culinary culture of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Burgundy, which constructed the feminine and masculine at each age based on the sacrifice of a pig and the preservation of salt pork. This constituted a total social event for the “culture of Minot,” a village in the region of Châtillon. She shows how the regulation of behavior of men and women, division of roles and tasks, an image of the female as reproducer, and even a discourse of eroticism and recipes come to be.

What happens if one examines Greek and Roman antiquity from the perspective of Minot? In Rome, of course, pigs were also killed in the *uillae* in the winter to prepare salt pork, but this act introduces no distinction of gender nor any symbolism of reproduction or sexuality. No female presence is attested at these occasions, either because women did not participate or because their participation did not differ symbolically from that of men. While Verdier develops at length the prohibition of menstruating women from touching the barrels of salt pork, which they would cause to turn bad, this prohibition as related by Columella applies both to men and women after the sexual act (12.4.3).

The historian of gender who takes an interest in antiquity quickly becomes baffled; it is another world. Today, a certain kind of gendered, and thus differentiated, social behavior, especially sexual, is expected from all those born physiologically as boys or girls, who are immediately classified as such with regards to their civil status. Gender concerns everyone. In ancient Rome and Greece, this was not the case. What mattered was the difference in status

between slave – by birth or captive of war – and free (freed and free by birth), child and adult, citizen and foreigner. Only the citizen (*uir*, *anêr*) and his wife (*matrona*, *gunê*), free and adult, were fully assigned a genre. For others, gender was variable.

However – and this further complicates the issue of gender and sexuality in antiquity – the morality of gender, that is to say conformity or nonconformity to a male or female ideal, was not based on sexual differentiation. It was the difference in status, projected into a moral distinction between “freedom” and “servility,” which made reference to the sexual. It was freedom that determined ancient masculinity; servility meant “softness” – sometimes called “effeminacy” – although this weakness was not characteristic only of women. The gender identity of erotic partners was involved in the definition of masculinity.

The ideal of masculinity was the *virtus* (*aretê* in Greek) of the citizen, soldier, and orator, excluding any sexual determination; while this ideal was in fact quite accessible to the majority of male citizens (*uiri*, *andres*), married women (*matronae*, *gunaikes*) were not *a priori* excluded from it. *Virtus* is recognized in Sulpicia, the mother of the Gracchi, as is the *aretê* of the wife of Isomachos in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*. Finally, in contrast to “Mediterranean” *machismo*, ancient masculinity imposed limits on sexual pleasures, any excess, regardless of the sex of the partner, causing a man to fall into *mollitia* and effeminacy.

The gender distinction, without exception, does not concern slaves, who are simply possessed of a sex in the way that animals are, and it was the same with freedmen, even though, unlike slaves, they could have free children and start a family. Within the limited scope of life as a couple (*contubernium*), gender distinctions can sometimes be detected among Roman freedmen and even slaves if their social position requires a professional complementarity: the agronomists attributed to the *uilicus*, for example, a *uilica* (the farm manager and his wife).

Conversely, the poorest, such as free actors or Roman gladiators, often stripped themselves of the honor of gender. Their statutory infamy – their lack of masculinity – was largely offset, in the case of the stars of the stage or the arena, with huge cash winnings. In general, the entirety of any population, free or not, is involved in many small businesses, some of which are related to food – we remember the mother of Euripides, a greengrocer, some carried out more by women, others by men, without our being able to speak of a gendered division.

It is therefore impossible to speak in general of men and women in antiquity, but also impossible to restrict the study of gender to the class of free individuals. How can we see what influence distinctions of gender and sexual eroticism had on food and eating in antiquity?

A prior finding: the production of food, its preparation, and its use did not centrally involve gender distinctions in antiquity. Moreover, some anthropological universals are untrue, such as the idea that the mother would be – naturally – a nurturing figure. Thus in Rome the father, not the mother, held the position of nourisher of his children, and the nourishing Earth is “the land of the fathers” (Dupont, 2002). Or that kitchen work would be women’s work: it is well attested, for example, that in Rome the *matronae* were not involved in anything in the house except spinning and weaving (Plu. *Rom.* 15.5). It may well have been different in certain Greek cities. It is therefore preferable to investigate without bias certain Greek and Roman practices, linking gender, sexuality, and power. This will lead us to conclude the following.

- Gender, defined in the context of marriage between citizens, implied the exclusion of married women from blood sacrifice and the meat-cooking that was its extension, activities reserved for male citizens, but in Greece required these women to look after the supplies provided by their husbands and kept in the house.
- The definition of gender in the context of pleasure did not separate sexual consumption from that of wine and/or food at the banquet. Thus, in Rome, *mollitia* was caused by the abuse of pleasures, whatever these pleasures might be.
- Gender, male as well as female, in various private or public spheres where food was involved, was unstable.

The Wife as “Terrible Cook”

A salient feature concerning diet, common in Rome and the Greek cities, was the exclusion of married mothers (*gunaikes*, *matronae*) from the practice of blood sacrifice; this was carried out only by adult men and citizens (*andres*, *viri*) (Schmitt Pantel, 2011). This relationship to sacrifice defined both genders in the public space.

Sacrifice and the arbitrariness of gender in Greece

The exclusion of *gunaikes* from blood sacrifice was political, and unrelated to their female bodies. They were indeed present in the sacrificial area, along with young free girls, as water-bearers or basket-bearers. They could also, very rarely, sacrifice, on condition of doing so only when alone and in the absence of *andres*, for example during the Thesmophoria (Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 132, 397; Detienne, 1979b). This liturgy in honor of Demeter and Korê was reserved for legitimate married women and strictly prohibited to *andres*; men who were too curious were punished by physical violence, as was Battus, who was castrated. They formed, during the three days of the festival, a city

of women-citizens – they were called *astai*, as it were “female citizens” – away from their husbands, whom the stink of their fasting also helped to drive off. At Perga in Pamphylia, the priestess of Artemis and the wives of the *Prytanes* celebrated the official sacrifice every year in place of their husbands. “Enjoying equal rights, women here were in a position of co-eaters of meat” (Detienne, 1979b, 195). The gender distinction, through exclusion from sacrifice, was arbitrary even if linked with sex. What was unthinkable was that male citizens and women should sacrifice together, thus creating a mixed city.

The cuisine of the banquet, which was an extension of the sacrifice, was entirely in the hands of the cook-butcher (*mageiros*). Therefore, as Marcel Detienne says, married women made “bad cooks.”

At the banquet itself the presence of women varied according to time and place. The heroines of Homer, the wives of kings, participate as guests in the social consumption of the blood sacrifice, the banquet (*dais*). Everyone present eats bread and sacrificed meat and drinks wine. It was the same in the Roman *cena*, where married women and free children were present, often sitting while their husbands reclined.

In the classical period, Greek citizens admitted neither their mothers, their wives, their daughters, nor their sisters to the banquet. Participation in sacrifice and the banquet that was an extension of it meant, in that period, entering into a friendly sociability constructed by male citizens alone, to the extent that a bride did not participate at her own marriage-feast. However, married women did share in the sacrificial meat and eat it like male citizens.

In the private space of the house (Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 227–9), as seen in the *Ecclesiazeusae*, the *gunaikes* excluded from the public cuisine fed their husbands not sacrificed meat but flat pastry cakes, purées, and sweets. Those excluded from the civic banquet participated in the domestic meal (*deipnon*). The symbolic status of these *gunaikes* was not that of cook, but of dispenser of household goods (see below).

Rome: gender trouble

In Rome (Scheid, 1991), this arrangement was even more pronounced: married women did not sacrifice and were not priestesses, even when it came to honoring goddesses associated with the fertility of the soil. *Dea Dia* was celebrated by the college of Arval Brethren, crowned with ears of corn, representing the proper ripening of the grain. Ceres, Pomona, and Flora were represented by a *flamen*. This exclusion of women (*gunaikas*) extended to prohibiting them “from grinding corn or preparing (*mageireuein*) meat dishes for their husbands (*andri*)” (Plu. *Roman Questions* 85). The Greek text refers to the pounding of the flour of emmer (*far*) for the sacrificial meal, which would be mixed with salt (*mola salsa*), and the prohibition applies only in the gender relation that assumes marriage between a traditional Roman citizen

and a young free girl. This ban, coupled with that of *temetum*, the pure wine used for sacrifices, defined the *matrona*.

Certain priestly roles, however, with the sacrificial practices they imply, were entrusted to priestesses born as girls, but assigned a “transgender” public status. The Vestals pounded the sacred flour and carried out sacrifices. Bearing the status of unmarried girl (*uirgo*) until they left office, they nevertheless wore the red veil and the six-tressed hair style of the married woman. A Vestal was not under the power of her father or her husband. In law, she was a male citizen. “The Vestals were both young girls and matrons; better, they were also men, by a series of legal privileges from which girls and matrons were excluded They had a *lictor*, were ‘capable’ of testifying in court, and free from the guardianship of a father or husband, that is to say, could freely dispose of their property and make wills” (Scheid, 1991, 502).

We see that a young Roman girl, born free, could be deprived by the institution of her “virginity,” that is to say, excluded from marriage, and thus from motherhood and sexual intercourse; she acquired in this way an aspect of the male gender, which granted her potential access to the production of sacrificial meat and confided to her the making of the salted flour, essential for public sacrifice, by pounding the *far*, a prohibited act for a *matrona*. Comparably, the “Salian virgins” bore the *apex* of the flamens, the military coat of the Salii, priests of Mars, and offered a sacrifice in the *Regia*.

By a different arrangement, the wives of priests could replace their husbands through fusional marriage. The *flaminicae*, the wives of *flamens*, and the *regina sacrorum*, the wife of a *sacrorum rex*, made sacrifices and possessed the sacrificial knife. The masculine powers available to them derived from their status. Their husbands were priests only insofar as they were domestically complete men, and had to have a living wife because their charge was that of a couple, not that of a man. What one did was done also by the other and vice versa, even in their absence. This is a different status in marriage, which makes a “wife” into a performer of sacrifice. She and her husband formed a “fusional” couple, a sort of Platonic androgyne in terms of gender. Thus the *flamen dialis* had a diminished masculinity, and could not be a soldier or even a magistrate. He ought never to go hungry, and always had with him at night a box of little cakes (Gell. 10.15).

Finally, when a male citizen could not sacrifice, his wife, assisted by her children, replaced him, whether he were absent or whether it were a case of a foreign sacrifice that permitted this unfamiliar procedure (D.H. *Roman Antiquities*, 2.22.1).

It is remarkable that certain religious functions involving slaying the sacrificial animal, and assumed by women in Rome as in Greece, were not related to their physiology, and had nothing to do with fertility or fecundity; they were made possible by internal displacement of gender relations, which

in one way or another granted them a share of masculinity and access to sacrificial food.

The Female Guardian of Food and Household Goods

Another definition of gender is also associated with blood sacrifice by Jean-Pierre Vernant in a famous study (“A la table des hommes” in Detienne & Vernant, 1979, 37–132), where he shows how in Hesiod consumption of boiled and roasted sacrificial meat involves the cultivation of wheat for making bread; the two foods set up a distinction between *andres* and *gunaikes*, who marry to have legitimate children. Pandora, the first wife, *gunê*, given by Zeus to Epimetheus, is a *gaster*, an insatiable belly for food and sexual pleasures; her husband will exhaust himself with a double labor for her in order to have children. This terrible *gaster* is both greedy and lustful, lazy and drunken. The husband produces, the wife consumes.

Pandora does not stand for woman in general, whose lustful gluttony would be the expression of her feminine nature. Her femininity is so unnatural that Hesiod may oppose the husband and wife in a metaphor that reverse the sexes: he is a worker bee, she a greedy drone. The gender distinction constructed by Hesiod should thus not be naturalized, or essentialized by making it the definition of the Greek *gunê*. It comes in the context of grain production and consumption; in other contexts, *aner* and *gunê* constitute other polarities, as we saw with sacrifice.

This devouring wife is the inverse of the thrifty wife, as seen in Xenophon. In the *Oeconomicus* (2.15), he opposes the husband and wife as the one who brings goods into the house and the one who watches over those assets and their proper expenditure. These characteristics allow the economic survival of the house and its prosperity: food, furniture, and slaves, which she cares for personally.

Xenophon uses the metaphor of the bee, which stands for the wife in his account as in Simonides and the *Thesmophoriazousai* (Detienne, 1972, 154–7), not as workers but as stewards. She has the role of steward, which was assumed in Hesiod by a slave, and does nothing else in the house. She does not cook, and if by chance she kneads bread it is only to take exercise (*Oec.* 10.11). We should not see in Hesiod and Xenophon two competing visions of “women.” The *gunê* in Hesiod is a *gaster* of unbridled appetites; that of Xenophon is also a *gaster*, but her education, which she shares with her husband, has moderated her appetites as appropriate (*panu kalos*) (10.11). The function of housekeeper that Xenophon attributes to the wife in the house is not “natural.” It is a role assigned by gender: that of managing supplies. Xenophon explicitly distinguishes the order of birth sex (7.17) – male and female – and what arises from gender – the husband and wife in marriage.

The same feature is found in Rome, not in the *matrona* but the *uilica*, slave or freedwoman, bound to a slave or a freedman, *uilicus*, in a complementary status that reveals their gendered denomination. They are masculine and feminine in the same function (Columella *RR* 12, referring to Xenophon and to his translation by Cicero). The *uilicus* reaps, while the *uilica* takes care of the storerooms and barns, makes preserves, and cares for sick slaves. There is no *uilicus* without a *uilica* (Cato *Agr.* 56 and 142; Var. *R.* 1.18); farmers could only operate as a couple, like the *flamen dialis* and *flaminica*. Their status creates a distinction of gender limited to their respective positions in the *uilla*. There are concubines (*contubernalis*), whose moderate sexual activities only serve to send the *uilicus* back home, without however wasting his time and his strength.

In the banquet of Trimalchio, the same economic system defines two genders among freedmen. Trimalchio and his guests are men married to former slave companions, *contubernalis*, whom the text describes as *conjuges*. None of them have children, and the bond that unites them to their wives is economic: they are indispensable managers, like Fortunata, the wife who once saved him from ruin; during the feast she watches over the silverware, and gives the leftovers to the slaves. In this world of freedmen, the feminine virtues that trigger “love” are economic (Petron. 36, 67, 71, & 76).

A different relationship to food therefore constructs distinctions of gender from the different sexes in two different spaces.

- The political space, where one sacrifices and the other does not, defines male citizens and married women. When necessary society creates transgender figures (the Vestals) or arrangements (the flaminic couple).
- The domestic space, where one provides and the other takes care of the provisions, by consuming them or preserving them, introduced a gender distinction applicable to non-citizen couples.

These distinctions do not overlap in Rome, in contrast to classical Greece, where the wife of the citizen Isomachos is also matron of the house.

Symposion and comissatio, gula and mollitia

The Greek *symposion* is a banquet different from that which follows on the blood sacrifice. The guests summon Dionysos, Eros, and the Muses, sharing wine, desire, and singing (Dupont, 1994; Lissarrague, 1987a). This was a space for socializing away from home, a space of *hetairoi*, which excluded *gunaikes*. Only *andres* and adolescents were present, on the one hand, and on the other courtesans, professionals in music and love. There were also *paides* (slave girls). Eros circulated regardless of sex, wine and music inflaming and controlling desire. This type of banquet does not appear until the beginning of the classical age. It was a space for pleasures outside of marriage, which was

also a place for transmission of male virtues specific to the *symposion*. An accomplished citizen – *anêr* – in fact a nobleman, was involved from the end of his childhood in the *symposion*, where he learned to live with and manage the three intoxications: wine, song, and desire. In this space, the masculine gender was constructed through the fine consumption of wine, in opposition not to the female gender but to the loss of restraint of the satyr (Lissarrague, 1987b).

The banquet space as a place of erotic pleasures in relation to food is present in the Hellenistic and Roman world, whether diners did not drink wine until after eating (*comissatio*), or food and beverages were taken together (*cena, conuiuium*). In Roman comedy, whose fictional place of reference is always a Greek city, the two terms are equivalent. The role of the banquet is bringing together young people and their *amicæ*, who are *meretrices*, and is presented thus by Terence (*Eu.* 732): “Without Ceres and Liber, Venus is ice.”

In Rome, wine was not the liquor of Dionysus, but simply a warming drink of greater or lesser delicacy. Abuse of fine wines and of “dissolving” foods such as oysters, fish, fungi, and fatty meats (*gula* or gluttony), associated secondarily with excessive sexual desire, made body and soul (*animus*) obese and soft, loose and without tone, all of which vices were included in the notion of *mollitia*. The *mollis* individual was opposed to the masculine ideal, *durus*, who had a lean, dry body, ate mostly vegetables and grains, and drank water without surrendering to sexual pleasures. Hypersexuality, manifested in adultery and partners of all kinds, especially male, partook of *mollitia*, that is to say, in effeminacy through pleasure. The *mollis* was the slave of his pleasures, the *durus* free from all desires. Absolute *mollitia*, like absolute *duritia*, led to death. *Mollitia* killed through putrefaction, *duritia* petrified. *Virtus*, masculinity, assumed a social identity, that is to say, sometimes it shared in the enervating pleasures of the banquet. This opposition of genders through *gula* did not apply to *matronae*; we do not know of *gulosae*.

Roman civilization was obsessed with *gula*, as shown by the edicts of the censor against the obese, who were unable to fulfill their role in the army, and the sumptuary laws limiting luxurious banquets. Masculinity was lost through the mouth. This centrality of the mouth in moral discourse is visible in the erotic practices of the banquet, which emphasized kissing as an exchange of breath, and tended to neutralize gender differences (Dupont, 1999a, 150–94). In Plautus, just as in Catullus and Petronius, the kiss on the mouth – *osculum, basium* – is the only form of physical eroticism at the banquet. This kiss is a symmetrical exchange of breath, which concerns itself with neither the gender nor age of the mouth kissed, but only with the sweet smell compared to the flower of wine (cf. Boulay in this volume), or on the contrary the stench caused by *gula*. This kiss was as light as a perfume, it did not satisfy, and did not soften him who gave or received it. This oral eroticism, idealized in the kiss, is stigmatized by the satirists when the gluttonous mouth is devoted to

the genital pleasure of a male or female partner. The *mollis* has a stinking mouth for one or the other reason.

The Roman image of the body at the banquet was focused not on the stomach but on the mouth, with the following configuration: the masculine mouth of the speaker, the effeminate and rotten mouth of the eater, the neuter and fragrant mouth of the lover. *Mollitia* is attributed by ancient historians to despotic emperors like Tiberius or Nero, because tyrants are not free men, citizens, but slaves to their desires, abandoning themselves indiscriminately to gluttony and excessive sexuality, and so losing their masculine gender.

The Masculinization of Women Castrated by Christian Abstinence and Fasting

The relationship of food, sexuality, and gender changes in the Roman Empire with the advent of Christianity, which is marked in particular by the new concept of “flesh” (*caro*) that confuses the body of man and his food. Originally designating the sacrificial part of an animal, and more generally the meat consumed, the term *caro* also came to mean flesh as the material and lustful dimension of man, as opposed to its spiritual dimension and the love of God. The flesh includes sexuality, the “sin of the flesh” (Paul *Ep. Rom.* 8:5–13).

What does not change is that sexual pleasure is inseparable from gluttony, the appetites of the flesh reinforcing each other. Therefore, to free his mind and to be closer to God, becoming a monk or nun, the Christian constrained himself to abstinence and fasting, the latter promoting the former (Grimm, 1995, 225).

The Christian relationship to food was first established on the rejection of the food taboos that characterize Judaism (Tac. *Hist.* 5.4; Suet. *Aug.* 76.2; Fro. *Aur.* 2.7 Christianity under the leadership of St Paul thus abandoned *kashrut* as well as circumcision, at the Council of Jerusalem in 50 AD. Although abstinence and fasting were signs of heresy to St Paul, fasting as an ideal of life would yet become a proper Christian practice, because it allowed abstinence through desexualizing the bodies of young girls, something reproved by the Talmudic texts. In the Jerusalem Talmud it is recounted that a girl fasted so hard she lost her young girl’s body, that is to say its ability to marry and have children (Grimm, 1995, 229). We see the link made between gender and food that will be central to Christian ascetic practices from the third and fourth centuries AD (Brown, 1988 /2008).

In this period Clement of Alexandria, St Jerome, and Tertullian make the mortification of the flesh by fasting and abstinence a way to holiness. The full and satisfied stomach stirs sexual desires; inversely, fasting makes the mind sharper and the soul stronger. Women, who are more “prone to lust” than men, are thus subjected by their spiritual advisers to severe fasting. We

recognize here the Roman image of *mollitia*: in order to maintain abstinence, they must abstain from meat, wine, and hot food. Cold vegetables, bread, and occasional small fish should be their diet (Jerome *Letters* 54.10). However, for men as for women, fasting is worthwhile not in itself, but a means of preserving chastity.

The ideal is absolute deprivation of food. St Jerome wrote of Paula, a *matrona*, who became his friend, that she “rejoiced in her abstinence and fed on her fasting” (Letter 45.3, to Asella). *Castitas*, which had been respect for the rules of marital sexuality, became the total absence of sexuality.

This abstinence is the price virgins must pay for access to masculinity; they may thus have relations of *amicitia* with other abstainers. *Amicitia* exists only between *uiri*, and characterizes the relations between citizens of a free city. The abolition of their sexuality, like the young girl from the Talmud, allows them to change gender in approaching holiness. The Roman model of masculinity is found in this holiness, which certainly did not assume continence, but the next thing down from it, the reduction in feminizing desires and pleasures – gastronomic and erotic – to a minimum. In both cases the male gender is based not on sexuality but on the denial of any sexuality.

It is a case of a transgendered passage through the abandonment of sexuality and through fasting: in fact Christian ascetics assume a masculine gender, since they have access to the social relationship of *amicitia*. Thus some versions of the story of Pelagius relate that Pelagia would become a man by fasting in the desert, which became manifest upon her death (Garnsey, 1999, 97; Villemur, 1999), like the virgin Thecla, who takes the place of Socrates in the *Symposium* of Methodius.

St Jerome wrote in this connection “Inasmuch as a woman (*mulier*) agrees to conceive and have children, she is as different from the man as the body is from the soul. But if she serves Christ instead of the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man (*uir*)” (*Commentary on Ephesians* 3.5). A marginal practice and not a general model of life, the choice of virginity through fasting transmitted, through its social effects, a striking conception of masculinity – of the male gender – as a femininity castrated of its sexual function.

Of course St Jerome, with whose extreme positions Augustin battled (Brown, 1988 /2008, 439–63), does not represent Christian doctrine as a whole, but he does show that the renunciation of the flesh allowed one to conceive of a change in gender without a change in body.

FURTHER READING

The collective work edited by Counihan & Kaplan (1998) gives an idea of how anthropologists believed the relationship between gender and power

works. Unfortunately it does not take into account historical anthropology. The monograph by Yvonne Verdier (1979) is an ethnographic study of rural cases and is exciting to read.

The best study on women in ancient Greek and Roman remains Duby & Perrot (1991). For gender and sexuality in Ancient Greece, the best introduction is Halperin, Winkler, & Zeitlin (1990). On the relations between gender and power in Rome, Dupont (1996). Oral eroticism in the Roman banquets is discussed by Dupont (1994).

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 8

Class and Power¹

Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp

In one of his Menippean satires, which is said to have borne the promising title “Who can tell what the late evening will bring?”, M. Terentius Varro wonders how best to arrange a banquet. He begins by deliberating on the adequate number of guests. “The lowest number of guests must necessarily begin with the number of Graces and extend at most to the number of Muses,” is his elegant formula to determine the right number, meaning that three is the minimum and nine the maximum. Besides the right number of diners, the selection of the guests and considerations of compatibility were of course also crucial for the success of any banquet. For Varro, an ideal banquet such as the one imagined in his satire could only be considered a success if a group of “nice people” is assembled who must be neither “too chatty,” nor too quiet and reticent. For Cato the Elder, as Cicero tells us in his work *De senectute*, the whole point of the *convivium* was to be together with friends and to enjoy the conversation. Accordingly, Cicero advises his friend L. Papirius Paetus in the turbulent times of 43 BC never to abandon these convivial gatherings altogether, because, according to Cicero, conversations at dinner among friends are especially suited to create “a sense of community, of harmony, and relaxation.” This is the reason why, as Horace confirms a generation later, the selection of the guests is so crucial. And finally Seneca, in his *Epistulae morales*, describes a meal without a friend as a “feeding of lions and wolves.” (Var. *Men. frg.* 333 [KRENKEL]; Cic. *Sen.* 45; *Fam.* 9.24; Hor. *Ep.* 1.5; Sen. *Ep.* 19.10; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 34ff.)

A Roman aristocrat’s main criterion for a successful *convivium* was therefore whether it allowed for a harmonious gathering of members of his family and a limited number of his *amici* – those confidants, consisting of both social equals and inferiors, with whom he was in regular contact and who assisted one another in both personal and political undertakings, shared common goals, and supported one another in court, in elections, and in the administration of their political offices. Within this group, banquets functioned as a crucial locus of communication and interaction, which, due to the broad spectrum of meanings covered by *amicitia*, could include close personal friends as well as political allies, equals as well as clients (Konstan, 1997, 122ff.).

As a result, the dining rooms of the aristocratic *domus* regularly witnessed gatherings of quite heterogeneous groups of diners. The master of the house and his family might recline alongside men and women, young and old, poor and rich, free people and freedmen, Romans and Greeks – from time to time

even the Emperor might take part. Because of this, such dinner parties were sites of lively communication between members of different social groups. They provided a framework for the establishment and cultivation of both horizontal and vertical contacts of all kinds and could thus help to balance out the various interests of these groups. The resulting integrative potential of these social practices in Roman society was therefore mainly due to the heterogeneity of the body of participants. However, this potential could only be realized if all participants obeyed certain traditional rules – in practice, this meant that everyone had to respect the obvious hierarchy among the participants and that each and every one of them was expected to act in accordance with their respective status and expected to be treated likewise. Every participant needed to be made clearly and unmistakably aware from the start which rank each of his fellow diners occupied within the group assembled in the *triclinium*. Usually this happened by means of the host's assignment of the places. The seating order at Roman banquets was usually arranged according to social standing and the guests were thus placed on the couches based on their status. The basis of the distribution pattern was the traditional *triclinium* with its three couches, each of which accommodated up to three guests. These were then arranged around a single table in the shape of a horseshoe (Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 101ff.).

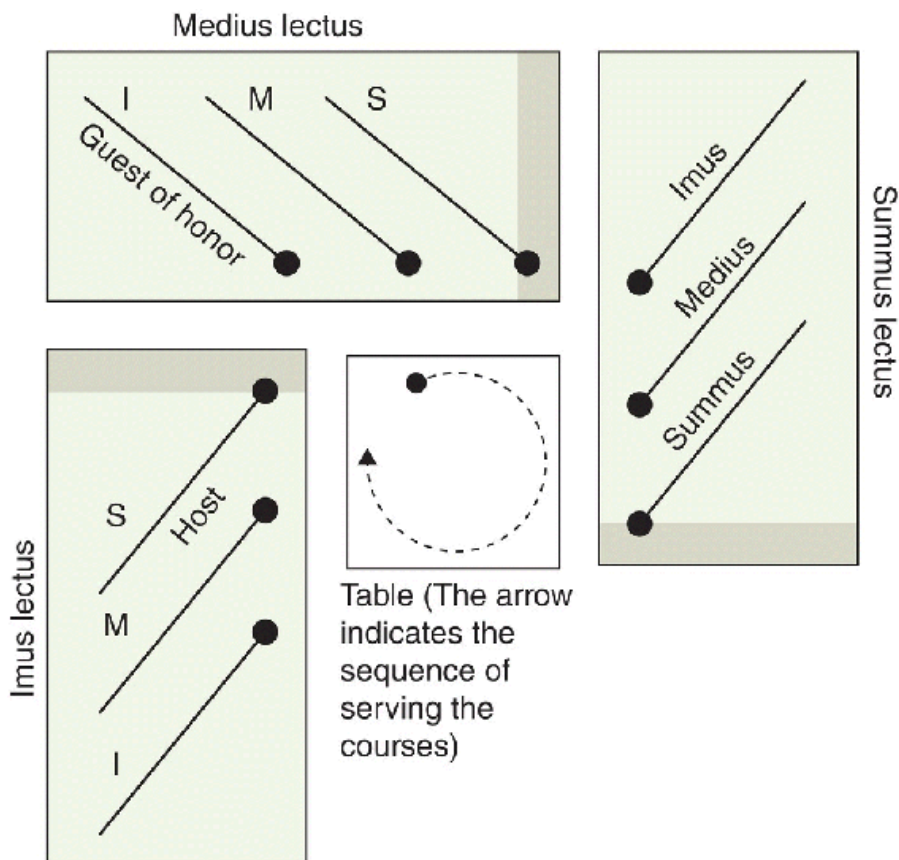


Figure 8.1 Reclining places on the *triclinium*.

Adapted from Stein-Hölkeskamp (2005b).

The couch on the left side of the table, the so-called *lectus imus*, was usually reserved for the host, his wife and their children. In Roman society, it was not out of the ordinary for women to take part in *convivia* and to recline on the couches among the men, eating, drinking, and feasting. It is thus not surprising that the authors of the late Republic and the Imperial period repeatedly mention women as participating in banquets. When Cicero invited his friend Atticus, it was taken for granted that this invitation extended to his wife Pilia. Cicero's spouse Terentia invited her sister-in-law Pomponia to a meal that also included Cicero himself, Atticus, and Atticus' mother. But women were not limited to presenting themselves as hostesses in the *domus* of their husbands or as their company when responding to invitations of friends and relatives. Pomponia, for example, also attended banquets without her husband if he was absent. This form of independence was of course even more applicable to the ladies of "high society," such as Clodia, the sister of the plebeian tribune Clodius, who has been immortalized as Lesbia in the poems of Catullus. (Cic. *Att.* 2.3; 2.12; 2.14; 4.12; 5.1; *Q Fr.* 3.1; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2001.)

The establishment of the monarchy by Augustus did not fundamentally change the practices of the traditional culture of conviviality. The women of the leading class continued to attend banquets as before – including those in the imperial *domus*, which now emerged as a central site of conviviality alongside the houses of the aristocrats. Augustus, for example, regularly hosted banquets for the senators and their spouses. Tiberius is said to have invited only the senators, while his mother Livia simultaneously entertained their wives elsewhere. When Livia attempted to ignore this arrangement and decided to host a feast for the “senate and the knights” on her own, her plan failed due to her son’s resistance. The Emperor was evidently not prepared to cede to his mother the part of host, which was traditionally reserved for the *pater familias* and could, in the case of grand imperial banquets, only be performed by the Emperor himself. Claudius later returned to the custom of inviting men and women of the upper class together. Nero met and came to like his later wife Poppaea at a banquet that she was attending together with her first husband Otho, who himself regularly held grand banquets for “upper-class women and men” when he was Emperor. (Suet. *Aug.* 69.1; Dio Cass. 55.2.4f.; 55.8.1f.; 57.12.4f.; Tac. *Ann.* 11.2.1f.; 13.46.1; Tac. *Hist.* 1.81.1; Winterling, 1999, 145ff.; Vössing, 2004, 290ff.)

These examples show that the traditional cultural practice was hardly affected by the transition from the old era to the new. For women, who were of course excluded from politics proper and could neither hold office nor speak in the senate or the popular assembly, the *convivia* provided an opportunity to be present in a space that had always formed a crucial point of contact between public and private, between domestic and political life, for the banquets that took place in specially reserved rooms of the aristocratic and imperial *domus* had always been a place of interaction that allowed for members of the family to meet outsiders. Here, the sociable setting facilitated friendships and alliances that could also extend into politics. Here, lively conversations pinpointed the newest trends in current politics, society, and culture. Here, host and guests expressed their individual claims to appreciation and influence in manifold ways and with public effect. The women were intimately involved in this complex carousel of communication and interaction. They saw and were seen, they heard and were heard. They learnt what was going on in the world, what the topic of the day was, who was currently in and who was out. Beyond that, they also actively contributed to the enhancement of the reputation and glory of their *domus* by means of their personal status, meaning their descent from an influential family and the norm-abiding behavior they exhibited on public occasions (Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005a; Roller, 2006, 96ff.).

Not only women, but also the host’s children, both boys and girls, were placed on the *lectus imus* – a custom that Valerius Maximus attributes to the “good old times” in his collection of *exempla* entitled *Facta et dicta memorabilia*.

However, even in his day, the Romans were still convinced of the pedagogic value of participation in the *convivia*, for as Pliny the Younger, writing generations later, points out, they believed “that the young learn from their elders not only with their ears but also with their eyes.” As a result, it was customary for sons to accompany their fathers from a young age on all public occasions. They were by their side when they went to the forum with their *amici* and their clients and fulfilled their functions as orators, advocates, and patrons. However, the public life of a Roman senator was by no means limited to the genuinely public sphere, to the bustling activity of the forum, the curia, or the magistrate’s office. A Roman aristocrat’s day to day routine also included the morning reception of his clients, visiting the baths and the gymnasium, attending festivals and public games, and, last but not least, the participation in daily banquets with family members and friends. All these activities can be considered public insofar as the individual invariably acts in full view of his equals and the members of other social groups. These tasks were all part of the multifarious role of *pater familias*, and their fulfillment also manifested his all-encompassing political and social prominence. Behavior that was adequate to his status and thus to the norms of society was therefore crucial for an ambitious *nobilis* or an influential *vir clarissimus*, both in the public situations just enumerated and on the political stage proper. (V. Max. 2.1.1-10; Plin. *Ep.* 8.14.)

Their sons, who bore their name and were supposed to safeguard the status of the family in the next generation, thus needed to be taught by their fathers all those abilities that would allow them to succeed in all areas of this competitive aristocratic culture. They had to be a living example of the manners and demeanors that were appropriate to specific occasions: when to be jovial and when to be superior; when to flaunt luxury and sophistication and when to insist on dignity and morality. The participation of the children and teenagers at banquets was thus a very important part of this process of socialization. After all, the roles of host and guest of a *convivium* were central to the typical aristocratic lifestyle, given that these dinner parties fulfilled many different functions in the complex communication process into which the families of the leading classes were integrated. This was the environment in which one encountered equals and members of other status groups. It provided opportunities to show off the material opulence of the *domus* and the education and sophistication of the family. “Learning by doing,” the acquisition of aristocratic cultural practices by participating in the *convivium*, must therefore have been just as important in the education of upper-class teenagers as their actual instruction in political conduct in the forum (Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 86; Roller, 2006, 157ff.).

Immediately adjacent to the *lectus imus*, which accommodated the host and his family, stood – at least in the traditional *triclinium* – the *lectus medius*, on which the higher ranking guests were placed. By general agreement, the guest

of honor reclined at the left corner (*imus in medio*) directly beside the host. Only this position, says Plutarch in an attempt to explain to his readers the differences between Greek and Roman dining arrangements, permits the highest-ranking guest to conduct important business, give orders, and sign documents even while the meal is under way. For this was the only position that was accessible from the side in such a way that its occupant could effortlessly interact with scribes and messengers (Plu. *Mor.* 619b). As a Greek, Plutarch seems to take for granted that the Romans took their duties far more seriously than his countrymen and did not even take time off for mealtimes. The hierarchical character of this typically Roman mode of place setting is also reflected in the terminology, for the Republican and Imperial authors tend to describe the individual positions as *imus* or *summus*, *inferior* or *superior*. The place of honor was called the *locus consularis* or *locus praetorius*, names that contain obvious references to the offices and honors of those for whom it had originally been reserved. In this case, the seating arrangements at the banquet were modeled on the differences in rank among senators. The least honorable place on the other hand, was called the *locus libertinus*, as freedmen, who were always inferior in status to the other participants, were usually relegated to the lower end of the third couch. The strict order of the arrangements at the table thus accurately mirrored the traditional hierarchies of Roman society: men were placed “above” women, the father “above” the son, the patron “above” the client, the free-born citizen “above” the freedman; and a senator of consular or praetorian rank had his place “above” everyone else.

This custom of placing clients and freedmen on the lower places of the last couch was symbolic of the unequal treatment and catering received by guests at banquets, a trend that is typical of all eras of Roman history. However, clients of all status groups were certainly an indispensable part of these dinner parties, which took place in the homes of the wealthy every day. The reputation of an aristocrat among his equals and the number and status of the clients who visited him in his *domus* and formed his retinue during public appearances were very important – this is of course especially true for the Republic. However, also in the society of the Empire, which was downright “obsessed with symbols,” as Paul Veyne has put it, “an empty hall” or an “unaccompanied litter” were considered grievous shortcomings in the ubiquitous struggle for social distinction. Patrons and clients were meshed in a complex web of duties, many of which were also dependent on the status of the individual client. Generally speaking, significant differences in status within the clientele of a single patron led to a broad spectrum of possible favors. For *amici*, as the clients were called regardless of their personal rank and the intensity of the emotional bond with their patron, came from a number of different categories in Rome. On the one hand we have the younger “friends,” who belonged to the same circles as their patron and aimed to speed up their careers by being his protégés. Others hoped for material gain, gifts,

and generous bequests from the numerous childless aristocrats. And finally there was the group of those who were really dependent on the patron's financial support, those who needed the *sportulae*, small gifts of money or food, the old clothes, and the free meals at the patron's table in order to survive (Veyne, 1985b, 95ff.).

All these friends, both those of the "first class" and those of the "second class," assembled in the atrium every morning, and some might also gather in the *triclinium* in the evening. During these meetings both patrons and clients had to obey certain rules and to fulfill certain self-evident expectations as to their behavior. After all, these meetings had an important function in Roman society, a function that went far beyond the mere demonstration and intensification of the social bond between two individuals of unequal status. The rituals and practices of the patronage system with its deep-rooted "ethics of reciprocity" contributed to the formation of the vertical solidarity that is so crucial for the persistence of any society. In Rome the relationships between patrons and clients had always played an important part in balancing out the needs and claims of the various social groups and in compensating the sharply defined differences in rank and the immense differences in property by regulating, channeling, and institutionalizing communication between "top" and "bottom."

That a regulated exchange between patron and client during mealtimes did not exclude differentiated catering and treatment of the guests is revealed by a couple of examples from the Republic: such practices were apparently customary in the time of Cato the Elder, since Pliny the Elder tells us that, when Cato returned from an important and successful campaign in Spain in 194 BC and was celebrating his triumph, he emphatically boasted that during his absence from Rome he had never "drunk any wine different from the oarsmen's." In doing so, the consul, who ostentatiously preferred modesty and simplicity and unashamedly claimed these virtues for himself in his own works, undoubtedly wanted to set himself apart from contemporary practice. However, Cato's example did not change things. The Romans seem for centuries to have differentiated between their guests when it came to serving them at dinner. We catch a glimpse of this in the description of the fabulous banquet that Cicero gave in Caesar's honor in his villa at Puteoli during the Saturnalia of 45 BC. In his later letter to Atticus, Cicero describes how the dictator arrived with an enormous retinue, allegedly almost 2000 men. But despite this, the banquet ran its course without difficulties. The soldiers set up camp under the open sky and Caesar's companions dined in three *triclinia*, carefully differentiated according to status. "Even the less honorable freedmen and slaves lacked nothing," the host notes with a certain pride in his own logistics, "and the noblemen were catered for quite exquisitely." The dictator himself "ate and drank untroubled and heartily"; all in all it was "a splendid, glorious feast." Here the differences in catering are only mentioned en

passant, without comment or even moral qualification – indicating that Cicero considered himself well within the norm. (Plin. *Nat.* 14.91; Cic. *Att.* 13.52.)

It therefore seems that this kind of differentiated catering was a custom that had been practiced for centuries and was by no means considered indecent or amoral. At first, this form of differentiation was probably nothing more than one among the ubiquitous displays of hierarchy in Roman society. It was certainly appropriate to the asymmetrical relationship between patron and client – at least as long as it obeyed certain limits. This means that the patron was expected to treat all his clients solely on the basis of their status – no better, but also no worse. Above all, he needed to avoid intentionally insulting any of them; he could not force them to put up with “insults at dinner,” as Juvenal puts it in one of his satires. (Juv. 5.9ff.; Vössing, 2004, 240ff., 254ff.; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 92ff.)

But this is precisely what not only the satires of Juvenal are about, but also the texts of Seneca the Younger, Martial, and Pliny the Younger, all of whom repeatedly describe and criticize the negative side of client–patron relationships, the violation of the rules, and especially the misbehavior of patrons at dinner. These authors criticize virtually all aspects of these communal meals: the issuing of invitations, the catering, and, above all, the way in which people were treated and communicated with each other during these events. Martial and Juvenal, for example, complain how seldom the patrons of their time were prepared to dine with their clients. A certain Paulus, for example, is caricatured by Martial for another widespread bad habit, namely canceling dinners with clients because of some minor indisposition: Any “sudden, self-invented weariness” serves him as an excuse to work his way out of his duties. Virro, the parsimonious and arrogant patron in Juvenal’s fifth satire, deigns to invite his “modest client” for the first time in two months – a rude act of negligence towards his loyal *clients*, who of course had to rush to his patron’s house before sunrise every day. With this kind of behavior, Virro and Paulus robbed the relationship between patron and client of its regularity and reliability, qualities that are crucial for the smooth functioning of asymmetrical reciprocity of this kind. Moreover, by radically reducing the frequency of contact, they also significantly reduced the intensity of the personal relationship between the individuals involved. (Mart. 9.85; Juv. 5.15ff.; Damon, 1997, 181ff.)

Such a grave lack of personal attention is also part of another point of criticism expressed by both Seneca the Younger and Martial. His busy contemporaries, complains Seneca, no longer bothered to personally select and invite their guests for the evening *cena*. In fact, they delegated this duty to their nomenclators, who were instructed to invite a random group of people from the anonymous mass of visitors at the morning *salutatio* to the *convivium*. And Juvenal taunts that when the client had attained “the height of his wishes,” when he was finally reclining at his patron’s table and looking

forward to a meal that he considered the well-earned “payment in full for all his past service,” he was often in for a bitter disappointment, as banquets in Rome were commonly characterized by a mixture of “extravagance and cheapness,” as Pliny the Younger puts it. This meant that the *amici minores*, the “second class friends,” did not partake in the opulent and luxury meal enjoyed by the patron and his “first class friends,” but had to make do with far less costly dishes and inferior wines. Martial for example accuses one of these cheapskate patrons of serving one of his less important friends a menu worth one hundred quadrants – a pitiful sum – while himself indulging in the finest foods. And in another epigram of the same tone, the poet lists all the costly delicacies that the patron devours and compares them item by item to the meager victuals served the client: Oysters from the Lucrine Lake are contrasted with plain mussels, exquisite champignons with common horse-mushrooms, expensive turbot with cheap bream. Such unequal treatment of course makes the lesser friends angry: another patron has thought up the trick of serving the better wine in opaque cups made of agate – a transparent move that is thoroughly ridiculed by the satirist. (Sen. *Ep.* 19.11; Juv. 5.12ff.; Plin. *Ep.* 2.6; Mart. 3.60; 4.68; 4.85; D’Arms, 1990.)

A fundamental distortion of the patron–client relationships is also indicated by those passages in the works of imperial authors that mention the convivial conversations between patron and client at dinner. This kind of communication between the host and his “lesser friends” must of course have always been difficult, in view of the obvious gap in status and the client’s inhibitions. The kinds of misunderstanding that could occur on these occasions can be illustrated by an anecdote about the famous orator M. Caelius Rufus reported by Seneca the Younger in his work *De ira*. Caelius, who is said to have been a man with a ferocious temper, was dining with a client who was “quite unusually long-suffering.” The latter was hard pressed to deal with “the aggressiveness of the man to whom he was bound,” and therefore resolved to “agree to anything his interlocutor said and take a back seat.” However, Caelius was far from happy with this. At length, he could no longer bear his client’s constant agreement and angrily exclaimed “Contradict me in some point that there may be two of us!” Irrespective of Caelius’ faults, the story clearly shows how difficult the interaction at dinner between patron and client always was and necessarily had to remain. The patron had constantly to calculate the right mixture of joviality and distance; the client had to keep trying to fathom how he could maintain his patron’s goodwill. This balancing act naturally required a high degree of circumspection and cleverness on the part of the patron, as he controlled all communication. As the superior, he had to show an interest in his client’s affairs and to appear affable and considerate. Furthermore, he had to discipline himself in such a way that he did not ostentatiously display his factual superiority. The ritual of the dinner party thus needed to blend the ubiquitous display of hierarchy with well calculated “gestures of familiarity,” which made it appear both

acceptable and legitimate to the client. If this balance were upset, if these gestures were not forthcoming or were actively withheld, the traditional convivial community would inevitably turn into a crude demonstration of the patron's total material and social superiority. The ritual was then unable to perform its original integrative and legitimating function, and could no longer facilitate the peaceful gathering of various ranks and status groups in the *triclinium*, which had been its function for centuries. (Sen. *Dial.* 3.3.8.6; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 99ff.)

As my examples have shown, the establishment of the monarchy by Augustus did not cause the hierarchical structure of the *convivium* to lose its binding force, which was deeply rooted in the collective conscience of the upper class. However, the sweeping political and social changes did modify some aspects of this culture of conviviality: one can, for example, note a tendency towards a gradual enlargement of these dinner parties, which was probably due to the inflation of standards by the imperial banquets. In addition, the general changes in the world of the elite, their greater interest in luxury and culture and in a more refined lifestyle, all contributed to changes in the composition of dining groups, for the meals in the aristocratic and imperial *domus* increasingly opened up for those people who were now “in” – in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu's “distinctions” – for example people who possessed a particular skill in poetry or art. As a result, these meals were no longer the exclusive meeting places of the political élite, because they were no longer restricted to the senators and their families, friends, and clients, but had also opened up to accommodate poets and thinkers, philosophers and men of letters.

On the other hand, these larger and more diverse gatherings continued to preserve hierarchical structures. The seating arrangements continued to make this structure visible, even though the distribution of the places now obeyed other criteria, as the political offices were no longer sufficient in every case. A significant example for a new application of the old rules is provided by Horace's elaborate satirical account of a banquet in the house of the rich gourmet Nasidienus. Although this meal is entirely fictional, the poet still insists on giving his readers a detailed account of the distribution of the guests upon the couches. Nasidienus has invited the famous C. Cilnius Maecenas and a number of members of his circle. The poets and their patron share the places reserved for guests on the *lectus medius* and the *lectus summus*, with Maecenas occupying the place of honor *imo in medio*. The host himself reclines on the *lectus imus* beside his friends. The traditional place of the master of the house however, *summo in imo*, Nasidienus has ceded to Nomentanus, who should really have lain “below” him. His promotion to a “higher” place is evidently due to his expertise in culinary matters, which qualifies him as a direct neighbor and partner in conversation for the guest of honor. The seating arrangements of Nasidienus' banquet thus reflect the

hierarchical order of the participants. However, the decisive criterion that emerges for the distribution of the places on the couches is no longer a person's membership in a particular, politically defined status group, but rather one's involvement in a certain lifestyle and mastery of its typical cultural practices and modes of expression. Accordingly, it is Maecenas who presides over the banquet, the man who was the influential confidant of the first Princeps and the best-known representative of this new lifestyle, a man who managed to set new standards. His poet friends, who participate in his exquisite lifestyle thanks to his patronage, lie directly "below" him.

Nomentanus, a silver-tongued connoisseur of exquisite delicacies, lies beside Maecenas and "above" Nasidienus. By means of this arrangement, the host tries to use the expertise of his *amicus* to secure a place in the social elite, which is now also defined by prosperity, luxuries, and cultivated connoisseurship. (Hor. *Sat.* 2, 8; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 59ff., 107f.)

That these new hierarchies at dinner continued to be socially relevant throughout the next couple of generations is proven by another fictional account of a banquet. It was written by the writer Lucian, who was born around 115 AD in Samosata on the upper Euphrates. Lucian dabbled in numerous literary genres, but his particular appeal lies in his own creation, his "satirical dialogues," which combine elements of the Socratic dialogues and New Comedy. In these dialogues Lucian mainly attacks philosophy and her practitioners: in *Convivium* he exposes philosophers, grammarians, and teachers of rhetoric as selfish and quarrelsome ruffians. In *Deorum Concilium* he has Momos, the personification of censure, complain about the influx of new gods. And one of the *Dialogi Deorum* deals with the integration of these new arrivals, with their rank-appropriate inclusion among the number of the Olympians. Lucian, who had travelled the entire *oecumene*, who had been to Rome, Athens, and Alexandria and knew the lifestyle of the imperial elite by autopsy, was of course aware that the banquet was a very suitable place for the discussion of sensitive issues of status. And so he stages the debate between the new gods Asclepius and Hercules about their relative positions in Jupiter's dining room. The witty dialogue opens with the host's admonition of the upstarts: he wants them to stop quarrelling "as though they were men." However, his warning falls on deaf ears. Hercules in particular is by no means prepared to simply back down, because he has been assigned a place "below" Asclepius, whom he repeatedly insults as a "quack" and a "root-grubber" in his rage. His descent from Jupiter, his lifelong battles with "humanity's enemies," he argues, entitle him to recline "above" that "root-grubber," who is incapable of anything but "doctoring sick men." In response to this abuse, Asclepius bravely retorts from his "higher" place that Hercules had an emasculating affair with Omphale and murdered his own wife and children. Jupiter, the host, only intervenes when the quarrel about rank and place begins to escalate, when murder and violence threaten to put an end to the convivial spirit of the immortals. He finally affirms the initial hierarchy among the new

gods by saying that Asclepius rightfully occupies the place “above” Hercules, simply “because he died first.” (Lucian, *DDeor* 15; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 109ff.)

Lucian, a Syrian from Commagene and intimately acquainted with both Greek literature and Roman custom, hereby completes his transposition of the old dispute about the hierarchy at dinner into the Olympian sphere. As a keen observer of the *mores* of his time, he amuses his readers with a fictitious meal that caricatures a custom that had for centuries been a core element of the typically Roman way of life, which it had almost come to symbolize. It had become a cultural constant that had crossed borders and persisted through the ages. The fact that the description of the quarrels of Jupiter & co. at dinner evoked laughter even among the international and multicultural audience of Lucian shows that this originally Republican custom of having hierarchically organized seating arrangements at dinner had not only passed through all the political and social changes of the time unscathed, but had also penetrated the last nooks and crannies of the Empire by the end of the second century AD and was continuing to control the convivial practices even there.

FURTHER READING

Research on the culture of food and conviviality in antiquity has long been characterized by a rather one-sided focus on the Greek symposium. A substantial number of studies have been published on this topic, which have also picked up on current approaches in other cultural studies. In doing so, they have provided new interpretations of the ancient sources and coaxed new answers out of them: Dentzer (1982); Dalby (1996); Lissarrague (1990); Murray (1990a); Slater (1991); Schmitt Pantel (1992/2011); Murray & Tecusan (1995). However, only recently has the investigation of eating habits and banqueting in the palaces of Hellenistic rulers, the houses of Roman aristocrats, and the residences of Roman Emperors begun to attract the attention of ancient historians. The most important contributions of the recent years are Dunbabin (2003); Vössing (2004); Stein-Hölkeskamp (2005b); Roller (2006); Nadeau (2010a). In addition, there are several edited collections of articles that delve into the topic and focus on various cultures and eras. Again, this is but a small selection of recent work: Forster & Ranum (1979); Flandrin & Montanari (1996); Dietler & Hayden (2001).

NOTE

¹ Translated by Henry Heitmann-Gordon.

CHAPTER 9

The Archaeology of Food Consumption

Martin Pitts

Food is a material fact of human existence, as borne out in the sheer quantity of archaeological evidence related to its production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. In this sense, archaeology offers an unrivalled perspective on ancient foodways, lacking both the geographical and social biases of the classical authors. Nevertheless, in spite of the plethora of extant food-related material evidence pertaining, it is not without its own prejudices and problems. Not least among these is the challenge of reconstructing the dynamics and meanings of food consumption from an essentially fragmented, incomplete, and static material archive. As the topic is so vast, the aim of this chapter is to showcase the potential of archaeological approaches. Of principal concern is the often complex relationship between consumption practice and the archaeological record, with emphasis on the role of food as a marker of social change in the Roman period. Eating and drinking in the ancient world had greater significance than mere biological sustenance, and were central to the articulation of social relations and identities in life and death. Whilst such practices or foodways were often highly culturally sensitive and specific, consumption in a wider anthropological sense has been long understood as a mechanism for marking social differentiation (Veblen, 1899; Bourdieu, 1986; Miller, 1987; Douglas & Isherwood, 1996). In this sense, the archaeology of food consumption, as opposed to production or exchange, offers significant potential for fresh understandings of ancient society, particularly in terms of characterizing of social and cultural change.

Rather than defining food consumption in terms of a series of specific events, it is arguably more profitable to see it as a much bigger process, from selection to disposal (Campbell, 1995, 102). In this sense, consumption acquires greater meaning as a sphere of social practice in its own right, rather than the simple destination for the commodities of production. Therefore, the process of food consumption is considered here in terms of three constituent elements: acquisition (production to distribution), transformation (preparation to ingestion), and disposal. This framework echoes the approach of the social anthropologist Jack Goody (1982), who similarly found it useful to analyze cooking in the context of the total process of production, preparation, and consumption. Indeed, although an archaeological approach to the consumption of food and drink in its social setting (transformation) offers insights into identity and social differentiation in the ancient world, it is also one of the most problematic elements to infer directly. Thus, by studying the wider picture of ancient foodways, the risks of using fragmentary evidence

may be addressed and minimized.

Acquisition (Production and Distribution)

A basic prerequisite for any study of food consumption is to have some understanding of the prior stages of food production and supply. A basic assumption follows that the majority of food and drink consumed in the ancient world was produced locally, with most people having some involvement in the agricultural economy (Garnsey, 1999, 23). The main exceptions to this general rule were large urban centers that had outgrown their productive hinterlands, notably Rome (Mattingly & Aldrete, 2000), and frontier armies stationed away from the Mediterranean (Stallibrass & Thomas, 2008). Both had to be sustained through largely state-sponsored supply networks, most likely composed of private traders. While such regular state investment in long-distance trade may have encouraged localized developments involving large-scale production and exportation of certain basic foodstuffs such as grain and olive oil (Mattingly, 1988a, 1988b; Mattingly *et al.*, 2001), by modern standards markets in the Roman empire were not well integrated into a single “global” system of supply and demand. Occasionally the production of certain foodstuffs reached levels of surplus going beyond the needs of the empire’s urban consumers. One such case is that of Italian wine in the second and first centuries BC, with written (Diod. Sic. 5.28) and archaeological evidence (Tchernia, 1983; Fitzpatrick, 1985) pointing towards the emergence of free market trade as the excess wine was soaked up by voracious “barbarian” consumers in Gaul. Nevertheless, in the broader sweep of ancient economic history, such developments were usually the product of historically specific circumstances, in this case the development of slave-run *latifundia* (Hopkins, 1978), and were not sustainable. One important corollary pertaining to consumption is that “consumer choice” in foodstuffs in antiquity would have been for the most part regionally limited, particularly outside major urban agglomerations, with trade over longer distances being dictated by overarching and often largely politically determined supply networks. Nevertheless, the level of inter-regional trade should not be underestimated. Even largely self-sufficient territories would have had to be provisioned from afar during times of fluctuations in climate and harvest (Garnsey, 1999, 30), whilst studies of pottery provenance showing medium-distance exchange can often be regarded as a proxy for the movement of foodstuffs, and associated culinary products such as salt (Gerrard, 2008).

Transformation (Preparation and Ingestion)

Through consumption in a communal context, food is transformed from agricultural surplus into social capital. Goods and wealth are not simply

destroyed, but reincorporated into the social system (Gell, 1986, 112). As agricultural produce formed the primary form of surplus in the ancient world, such transformation was necessary, as food could not be accumulated without end and its value could only be realized in a comparatively short period of time (Murray, 1990b, 4). Countless ethnographic studies have shown that social relations are expressed and produced in the form of highly structured occasions of commensality (Gell, 1986). In this sense, communal consumption (problematically termed “feasting” in prehistoric archaeology, see below) can be regarded as social technology that helps to create and maintain social relationships by transforming surpluses in order to improve chances of survival and reproduction (Hayden, 2001, 26). Indeed, communal consumption in the form of the *symposion* was at the heart of political life in the Hellenic world, whereas the Roman *convivium* represented a means through which a greater proportion of society participated in the articulation of social relations and patronage through eating and drinking together. Furthermore, convivial behavior represented a medium through which “barbarians” were distinguished from Greeks and Romans, whilst simultaneously providing an arena in which provincial peoples could “learn to be civilized.”

At the heart of the fashioning of new identities is the empowering nature of consumption. Here the division of labor is critical, with the potential for identities to be differentiated on the basis of an individual’s role in the constituent elements of the process (i.e. production, distribution, cooking, serving, and consumption), differential access to certain commodities, the quantity of material consumed, and varying styles of consumption or accompanying social practice such as “table manners” (Elias, 2000; Mennell, 1985; see Nadeau (Table Manners) in this volume). Social differentiation can be facilitated by consumption as leisure, understood as the capacity to absent oneself from work (Veblen, 1899; Miller, 1987, 147) and consumption as luxury, understood as consumption that is non-essential for survival (Friedman, 1994b, 2), or more specifically for social or rhetorical purposes (Appadurai, 1986b, 38). To be truly empowering, consumption in many complex societies must follow the guidelines of the legitimacy principle of “taste” (Bourdieu, 1986). In the Roman Empire, such attitudes are evidently present in the letters of the younger Pliny, and moreover in the satirical work of authors such as Juvenal and Petronius. However, a focus on written sources alone risks a narrow view of ancient society. The rest of this section considers archaeological evidence in more detail in order to illustrate the range of insights possible beyond the realms of elites and textual evidence.

As acts of consumption are often characterized by material constraints, such a topic might be regarded as ideal for archaeological study. Archaeological evidence pertaining directly to the transformative elements of consumption can be divided into three broad categories – the food itself, the spatial setting

of consumption (ranging from temporary outdoor structures to purpose built dining-rooms), and the technology of consumption (incorporating the technologies of storage, preparation, serving, and eating). A further category of ancient media (e.g. art and visual culture) provides key insights into communal consumption (Dunbabin, 2003; Clarke, 2003; see Lissarrague in this volume), albeit indirectly and subject to similar biases as contemporary written sources, and should be studied separately. Similarly, human skeletal remains can be analyzed to provide general indicators about a given individual’s diet and nutrition through life, but are unable to give direct insights into individual meals and consumption practices. Nevertheless, in spite of this broad array of evidence relating to the dynamics of ancient food consumption, the value of such categories is dependent on a number of factors: how much of the material survives a given instance of consumption; the extent to which consumption technology was discarded or re-used for subsequent meals; the chemical aptitude of the material to resist or succumb to natural transformation processes (e.g. organic decay) (Schiffer, 1987); and the properties of the material to resist or succumb to cultural transforms (such as the recycling of re-usable materials), which will affect its visibility in the archaeological record (Schiffer, 1987). The potential effects of these factors are summarized in Table 9.1, and are discussed in turn below.

Table 9.1 Categories of archaeological evidence and factors influencing their usefulness in the characterization of consumption practices.

	Effect of consumption	Effect of cultural transforms	Effect of natural transforms	Archaeological record
Food remains: archaeobotany	digestion; uneaten waste	recycling (manure, animal fodder, burning) alters sample	bio-degradation, scavenging alters sample	bias towards durable and charred remains; representation greater in very arid/ waterlogged contexts
Food remains: zooarchaeology	butchery marks; whole or incomplete carcasses	high recycling value (e.g. tools, animal fodder, marrowbone processing) alters sample	biodegradation (dependent on soil conditions) alters sample	variable representation involving bias, dependent on context
Human skeletal remains	food enables growth and	highly susceptible to	biodegradation dependent on	variable representation;

	maintains bone structure	variations in mortuary practice; cremation hastens degradation and removes useful information	chemical properties of burial context	food insights limited to general nutrition or diet over several years
Structures: dining rooms and eating areas	usually negligible	re-use of buildings and materials (e.g. robbing) confuses identification of consumption loci	biodegradation of timber	identification problems compromise usefulness of category; consumption often not constrained spatially
Technology: metal	minimal	recycling and re-use; robbing	corrosion (dependent on soil pH)	variable representation involving bias
Technology: glass	wear, breakage	recycling and re-use (melting)	limited	variable representation involving bias
Technology: ceramic	wear, breakage	low recycling value (e.g. building material); highly redundant once broken	quantity remains fairly constant; spatial movement likely	archaeologically ubiquitous, representative especially in undisturbed contexts
Art and visual culture	not directly involved	all materials especially subject to recycling and robbing; modern antiquities trade	mostly limited	geographical coverage limited to 'core' areas. indirect and/or idealized representation of consumption with socio-political biases

With the remains of food itself, the archaeological evidence can be broadly divided between floral and faunal evidence. The most obvious drawback to this material is that much food is digested through consumption, thus making

it virtually impossible to directly reconstruct meal contents archaeologically, other than in cases of exceptional preservation where stomach and intestinal contents can be analyzed (Stead, Bourke, & Brothwell, 1986). The problem of a biased sample is compounded by the high susceptibility of food remains to post-depositional biodegradation, in addition to any previous recycling of waste from consumption into secondary products (especially with animal bone). Nevertheless, the analysis of archaeological food remains has much to offer the study of ancient consumption practices. With zooarchaeological approaches, there are a plethora of useful methods for understanding the consumption of meat in its wider social context. These include the identification of butchery marks on animal bones to distinguish culturally specific preparation practices (Maltby, 1989, 1994, 2007); statistical studies of the proportions of different species present at given settlements over time (Luff, 1982; King, 1984, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; MacKinnon, 2004); and approaches to animal husbandry through the analysis of the age and size of animal species at the point of slaughter, which can facilitate further understandings of relationships between producer and consumer sites (Albarella, Johnstone, & Vickers, 2008). Similarly, archaeobotany offers further evidence of food consumption, particularly through the identification of individual species of durable cereals, fruit stones, or weeds associated with certain crops, whilst a broader range of vegetable matter can also be preserved in waterlogged or highly arid conditions (Perring, 2002, 44–5; van der Veen, 1992, 1998; van der Veen & O'Connor, 1998; Cappers, 2006). In addition to the evidence of food remains themselves, it is possible to analyze food residues such as animal fats on cooking and storage vessels, although this relatively costly and time-intensive procedure can only be realistically applied to a small proportion of ceramic material (Heron & Pollard, 1987; Charters *et al.*, 1993; Colombini *et al.*, 2005).

A further way to look at the impact of food consumed is through scientific analysis of skeletal remains, which are often readily persevered in the archaeological record. Poor nutrition can be identified through developmental defects in the skeleton and teeth (e.g. enamel hypoplasias) (Mays, 1998). It is also possible to glean more detailed insights into diet through the chemical analysis of bone. Analysis of stable isotopes in particular has already found useful application in the Roman period (Prowse *et al.*, 2004), with work focusing on the study of carbon and nitrogen isotopes to gain insights into the relative consumption of meat, plant, and marine resources throughout the last few decades of an individual's life. For example, analysis using this method at the late Romano-British inhumation cemetery of Poundbury differentiated the majority of individuals from those buried in mausolea and lead coffins on the basis of the latter having consumed significantly higher levels of fish or fish products (Richards & Hedges, 1998). Unfortunately, this method is not currently deemed suitable for analysis of diet from cremated bone, with heating thought to cause shifts in the carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios

(Mays, 1998, 215).

The second category of evidence after the remains of food itself comprises the structures forming the spatial location and setting of consumption. In a domestic context, this may necessitate the archaeological identification of individual households (Allison, 1999, 2004), although more unusual locations may be associated with consumption in religious contexts (e.g. temples, shrines, and sanctuaries) and funerary contexts (e.g. cemeteries and *ustrina*). However, caution must be exercised in the identification of such locations through archaeological refuse deposition alone. The place of rubbish disposal does not necessarily equate to the actual locus of consumption (see next section). Unless purpose-built dining rooms or areas are straightforward to identify archaeologically, the value of structural remains to the study of ancient foodways can be rather secondary. Although the role of dining architecture has been productively studied in the Roman period (Dickmann, 1997; Dunbabin, 1995, 1996; Foss, 1997; Ling, 1995; Slofstra, 1995), the quality of evidence is often variable, particularly in outlying provincial areas and for lower-status households lacking purpose built facilities and/or clear differentiation between room usage. Nevertheless, from a more temporal perspective, it may be productive to investigate the relationship between changes in architecture and settlement morphology and any changes in consumption patterns in other classes of evidence.

The third and final category of evidence related to the transformation of food prior to ingestion, the “technology of consumption,” comprises containers and vessels for the storage, preparation, serving, and consuming of food and drink, including various forms of ceramic, glass, and metal vessels and accoutrements. Items in this category can be indicative of quite specific consumption activities, with vessel forms identified as cups and beakers being associated with drinking, platters and dishes with eating at a table, and so on. It is also possible to examine culturally unique items (such as the *crater*) that were vital components of social practices such as the *symposion* (Dunbabin, 1993). The identification of suites or services of vessels associated with specific social practices is best approached through a rigorous analysis of archaeological pottery assemblages in both domestic and funerary contexts (Pitts, 2010). Unlike virtually all other categories of archaeological material directly involved in consumption, ceramic material often undergoes relatively little transformation in quantity between its original use and excavation. During use, pottery can be worn down and broken, yet pottery sherds have a high resistance to adverse soil pH and other physical transforms. Furthermore, unlike animal bone and vessels made of other materials (especially glass and metal), pottery has few secondary uses once broken (e.g. as building material), having a relatively high level of redundancy and low recyclable value (although see Peña (2007) on pottery reuse). Although different categories of data should be considered complementary, pottery has an almost

ubiquitous presence on many Roman archaeological sites, and as a class of evidence is likely to be collectively more representative of consumption practice than any other class of archaeological find. Pottery in the Roman period occurred in a hugely variable range of forms and fabrics, often relating to specific elements of food storage, preparation, and consumption. Moreover, certain types of Roman pottery, particularly amphorae, often provide the sole evidence for culturally important commodities such as wine, olive oil, and garum (Peacock & Williams, 1986; Plouviez, 2003).

Despite the obvious potential of ceramics and other food-related material culture to bring new and more holistic insights into consumption practices in the ancient world, research on this subject to date has been geographically uneven within the ancient world. Roman Britain provides an excellent case-study for the benefits of such an approach, owing to the high intensity of archaeological fieldwork in the UK, a wide range of specialist approaches to the evidence, and a recent tendency for researchers to address the social significance of their material in addition to traditional matters of chronology and distribution. In particular, Cool's (2006) landmark study, *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain*, highlights the significant potential of future research in this area in the rest of the Classical world, through the integrated analysis of archaeological assemblages encompassing a broad range of classes of evidence relating to consumption.

Disposal (Discard and Deposit Formation)

The final stage of the consumption process consists of the disposal and subsequent transformation of meal remains. This is not necessarily a mere dumping of leftovers, and is often a significant act in itself, especially with more ritualized communal events such as funerary ceremonies. The manner of disposal represents a potential means to add value to the remains of a given meal, and can be equally bound up with notions of cultural identity. Therefore, this section assesses the potential of archaeological evidence formed after the transformation of food and drink in a meal. This evidence relates primarily to spatial patterning of material formerly involved in eating and drinking, and the characteristics of any deposits formed that include this material. Of further note here is the extent to which it is possible to identify and characterize specific consumption events or "feasts" (Dietler & Hayden, 2001) through assemblages of discarded meal remains.

Characterizing deposition

During and after the transformation of food in a meal, refuse can be discarded at the location of consumption (conventionally understood as "primary" deposition) or, more likely in a domestic or urban context, it can be moved away and accumulated elsewhere ("secondary" deposition). Of course,

instances of primary deposition would offer excellent indicators of the contexts within which consumption has taken place. However, cases of primary deposition of food refuse are likely to be rare, especially in domestic contexts. An ethnographic study of 79 cultural groups revealed that primary deposition is the ultimate fate of few material residues of household consumption (Murray, 1980), reinforced by LaMotta & Schiffer (1999), who argued that very little cultural deposition occurs within house structures during phases of habitation. Although attitudes to refuse disposal will undoubtedly vary between different cultural groups, it is probable that most refuse will be discarded away from the location of consumption; therefore, instances of primary deposition should be treated as special. From an archaeological point of view this observation is problematic, not least because it means that a high proportion of meal remains in the archaeological record have already been moved from their original contexts of consumption. Moreover, in the process of such secondary deposition, food remains and other associated materials will often be variably subjected to a range of cultural transforms such as recycling and sorting (see [Table 9.1](#)), rendering it erroneous to assume that the complete remains of a given meal would be disposed of in a single deposit. Interpreting such material is further complicated by the prevailing value systems of past societies relating to the disposal of food remains, which may seem less utilitarian when compared to modern western societies. Although a contemporary mindset might dictate that one does not throw away what is still useful, there are countless examples in both contemporary society and the archaeological record to the contrary (e.g. wishing-wells). Indeed, notions of social status are often bound up with the capacity to throw things away or waste conspicuously (Thompson, 1979, 1–2).

In previous attempts to understand “irrational” practices of refuse deposition, archaeologists have used the concept of “structured deposition.” This term was originally coined by Richards & Thomas (1984) to explain a range of Neolithic deposits otherwise described as non-domestic, unusual, symbolic, or purposeful (i.e. ritual). Although potentially of use in identifying the participation of archaeological food remains in past social practices (e.g. feasting), this concept is unhelpful due to its dependence on the contentious recognition of ritual in the archaeological record. Without a firm definition for ritual, the notion of structured deposition lacks any robust analytical utility. This phenomenon may be regarded as less problematic in historical periods with written descriptions of instances of “structured deposition,” such as the placing of a colony’s first fruits in the ceremonial pit or *mundus* in Roman urban foundation ritual (Brown, 1980, 17; Woodward & Woodward, 2004), although the identification of such specific features archaeologically has often proved controversial (Bispham, 2006, 95). Recognizing that a universally applicable definition of ritual does not exist, Hill (1995, 97–8) argued that ritual should be identified in archaeological terms as practices distinct from

everyday practices, which typify the ordinary and the routine according to the values of the society under scrutiny. Therefore, what is ritual deposition and “non-rational” can only be ascertained by first defining the mundane and “rational.” The same criteria can be applied to archaeological assemblages containing food and food-related material culture, in order to distinguish important feasting events from everyday forms of consumption.

Identifying feasting in the archaeological record

Research into the archaeology of feasting, notably the influential work of Dietler & Hayden (2001), has drawn attention to the possibility of reconstructing instances of communal consumption through an archaeological investigation of meal remains. Whilst typically focusing on New World archaeology and prehistoric Europe, such an approach offers considerable potential for offering complementary perspectives into food consumption in the Greco-Roman period. This concern with feasting fits within more traditional anthropological literature concerning the use of surplus for social benefit such as gift-giving (Mauss, 1976), with the characteristics of feasting coming under the heading of the “potlatch,” particularly in terms of the reciprocal inviting of guests and competition for hospitable honors (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996, 46). In this vein, Dietler (2001) offers a cross-cultural classificatory schema of feasts, in terms of their role in structuring power relations in society. Whilst the “empowering feast” involves the basic manipulation of food for the purpose of social positioning, the “patron-role feast” is more formalized, with the purpose of reinforcing entrenched social inequalities. In contrast, in the “diacritical feast” participants are accorded status on the basis of factors such as taste, manners, and styles of eating as opposed to reciprocity or the sheer quantity of food being consumed.

To distinguish feasting from more mundane everyday forms of consumption, Dietler (2001) argued that feasting is distinctive because it is a form of public ritual. In this sense, feasting (as ritual) can only be identified once there is some consensus on what constitutes the mundane, as with the similar notion of structured deposition discussed above. Thus, applying Dietler’s anthropological definition and taxonomy of feasting in an archaeological rather than ethnographic context is somewhat problematic. First, it relies upon the assumption that feasting as ritual is easily identifiable in the archaeological record, encouraging undue emphasis to be placed on unusual consumption events as opposed to the everyday. Second, although the three modes of feasting are not intended to be mutually exclusive, distinctions between them are not clear-cut, and it is difficult to envisage how they can precisely be elucidated from archaeological evidence. Hayden (2001) provides a more tangible list of archaeological criteria for the identification of feasting, including the presence of large quantities of food and/or consumption technology, rare or luxury foodstuffs and/or specialized feasting

paraphernalia, associated prestige items, and location in close proximity to special places and/or facilities (i.e. temples, funerary contexts, etc.). Nevertheless, the mere presence of these characteristics does not necessarily distinguish a feast from everyday forms of communal consumption, nor do they provide explicit guidance in determining the nature of power relations at a given instance of feasting. The difficulties in applying such concepts are clearly demonstrated in Ralph's (2007) study of feasting in pre-Roman East Anglia (UK). Here feasts are identified on problematic grounds (e.g. being equated with large pottery assemblages), and uncomfortable distinctions are made between different types of feast (e.g. work party, alliance-building and diacritical) on the basis of limited supporting evidence.

Although it is undeniable that individual consumption events can be plausibly identified in the archaeological record, distinguishing "feasting" from more everyday consumption is often fraught with problems. The issues of redundancy versus significance, and feasting versus everyday consumption, are often a matter of how deposits are structured, what they contain, and where they are placed. In view of this, a more productive methodological approach is to examine "feasting" in the context of broader food consumption patterns, by placing primary emphasis on the characterization of everyday or mundane patterns of the disposal of food and associated technologies in a given locality. This kind of research is necessary not only for the meaningful identification of feasting, but also to engender a more holistic understanding of food consumption that is not biased towards patterns of perversity. Instead of forcing assemblages into the uncomfortable opposition of feasting versus mundane consumption, an approach that treats all such evidence as providing valuable information on consumption as social practice is perhaps more commendable.

Conclusion: Towards a Holistic Archaeology of Consumption Practice

Although the quantity and diversity of archaeological evidence pertaining to food consumption undoubtedly offers significant potential for future research into ancient foodways, the sheer breadth of such data and methodological approaches arguably provides an obstacle to future synthesis. Integrated studies comparing several different classes of evidence in an analytical fashion have been few to date (Meadows, 1997, 1999; Cool, 2006), due in part to the tendency of archaeologists to specialize in studying one particular class of material evidence. Thus, it may be argued that the principal classes of evidence are best studied individually, but with greater emphasis on the findings being synthesized at a later stage. As a relatively young discipline, archaeology has rapidly fragmented in recent decades, with a growing number of researchers sharing closer academic affinities to those in other disciplines (from analytical chemistry to social anthropology and cultural geography)

than their contemporaries in archaeology, not to mention the continuing divide between prehistoric, Classical, and historical archaeology. In view of this, food consumption is perhaps one of the few themes in archaeology with the potential to re-unite its increasingly disparate strands, whilst simultaneously engaging the interests of related disciplines. Such integration is not only intellectually desirable, but also necessary to make archaeology more accessible and foster increased public engagement with the subject.

FURTHER READING

Food in antiquity is a popular subject, but as yet there are few introductions that deal with the archaeological evidence in a comprehensive fashion. A good introduction to the archaeology of food in general is provided by Brothwell & Brothwell (1998), spanning a wide range of periods and approaches. For more Classical content, Garnsey (1999) has much relevant archaeological content. For specific classes of evidence Dunbabin (2003) on architectural remains and MacKinnon (2004) on animal bones are good starting points. For an integrated approach to different kinds of archaeological evidence for eating and drinking in a particular region, Cool (2006) is unique, particularly in its accessible synthesis of complex assemblage data from decades of excavation reports. The problems and potential of studying feasting from archaeological data are explored in depth by Dietler & Hayden (2001). The present chapter has been heavily influenced by anthropological approaches to consumption; see Greene (2008) and Wallace-Hadrill (2008) for broader discussion of such concepts in the context of the Roman empire.

CHAPTER 10

Roman Food Remains in Archaeology and the Contents of a Roman Sewer at Herculaneum

Mark Robinson and Erica Rowan

The Survival of Ancient Food Remains

Human food comprises biological material and as such is vulnerable to decay under “ordinary” archaeological conditions in which a site is moist and not frozen for at least part of the year. However, some foods have a mineral component, which resists decay although it can be vulnerable to soil acidity, and special conditions can result in the preservation of the organic component. Examples are given here of different categories of remains and the evidence they can offer.

Vertebrate bones survive in calcareous and many neutral soils because bones mainly comprise calcium phosphate. Roman influence on the diet in Palestine was reflected by an increase in fish bones on settlements (Lev-Tov, 2003). Many edible marine mollusks and some edible crustaceans have exoskeletons of calcium carbonate (“The Sewer,” later). Some plant parts including cereal chaff contain silica bodies (phytoliths), which can survive in a variety of soils. Phytoliths from a Roman cemetery at Tarragona, Spain, gave evidence for cereals in the diet (Fox *et al.*, 1996).

It is possible for organic food remains to be changed into or replaced by material resistant to decay. If plant remains are heated in the absence of enough oxygen for complete combustion, they can be reduced to elemental carbon. Bouby and Marninval (2003) contrasted cereal and pulse offerings in Roman cremations from the Auvergne with exotic fruit and pastry/bread from French Mediterranean cremations. Plant remains can also become mineralized. Most relevant to the topic of food in the Ancient World is calcium phosphate replacement, which can occur in latrines where there is a source of calcium ions, perhaps from a limestone structure or from mortar, which react with phosphate ions from the sewage itself (Robinson, 2006, 212). Sometimes replacement is at a cellular level, but more usually the void left by the decay of the contents of a seed becomes mineralized, giving an internal cast. Seeds, which subsequently decay, can also become encased in a mineral deposit. The Herculaneum sewer contained much mineralized material.

Sometimes otherwise biodegradable food remains are preserved because

conditions are hostile to decay. Preservation by extreme cold is not relevant to the Roman world, but preservation by extreme desiccation does occur in the Middle East and North Africa. Vertebrate remains from Mons Claudianus in Egypt included skin as well as bone (Hamilton-Dyer, 2001). Another Egyptian desert site, the Roman port of Quseir al-Qadim on the Red Sea coast, had desiccated remains of black pepper, which had been traded across the Indian Ocean (van der Veen, 2011). A very important means of preservation is by waterlogging. If a sediment is permanently waterlogged, this prevents the diffusion of oxygen from the air into the deposit, and although some organic material decays anaerobically, the lignin and cellulose of plant tissue survive, as do pollen grains. The evidence for the spread of luxury food plants into the northern part of the Roman Empire was partly derived from macroscopic waterlogged remains preserved in wells, ditches, and so on (Bakels & Jacomet, 2003).

Formation Processes

Some categories of food remains enter the archaeological record more readily than others. The majority of remains available for study represent refuse and wastage from food processing, for example bones from the butchery waste of domestic animals or chaff from the de-husking of cereals. This can result in biases, for example the use of heat to de-husk some of the main cereals of the Roman world readily results in carbonized chaff being found on archaeological sites (Hillman, 1981) whereas cabbages are much less likely to become carbonized during processing. Often refuse can be mixed from many sources.

Latrines are another valuable source of evidence. They contain food remains, such as fish bones, splinters from larger mammal bones, and fruit seeds, which have passed through the human digestive tract and have survived digestion. Unfortunately, waterlogged latrines are rarely found, although evidence for the consumption of a flowering brassica was given by pollen from a cesspit at Silchester, UK (Dark, 2011). Latrines with mineralized material are more frequently encountered ("The Sewer," later). However, there are biases shown by the process of calcium phosphate mineralization. Plant items such as fig seeds, which form an envelope in which the reaction can take place, are commonly preserved, whereas cereal bran does not so readily survive.

One important though rare source of information arises when a disaster, usually a fire, has resulted in the preservation of food. A Roman shop destroyed by the Boudiccan burning of Colchester, UK, had a range of imports such as figs preserved through charring by the fire (Murphy, 1984). Herculaneum, Italy, is particularly famous for the food remains that were preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 (Meyer, 1980), including jars

of chickpeas in *tabernae* and bowls of fruit in the houses.

Food can be preserved as a result of ritual activity. Food offerings burnt as part of the funeral rites have been mentioned above. Food offerings to the household *Lares* at Pompeii, Italy, were burnt and buried in peristyle gardens (Robinson, 2002). Although there must have been biases in the foods selected, such evidence has the value that some items that are otherwise not often burnt, for example intact grapes and bread or pastry, enter the archaeological record.

The Herculaneum Sewer

A more detailed study of food remains is given for a sewer that has recently been excavated at Herculaneum as part of the Herculaneum Conservation Project. The sewer ran along the Southern side of Cardo V for about 80 m beneath the *Insula Orientalis* II (Figure 10.1) and had been constructed as part of the Palaestra development in the Augustan or Claudian period (Wallace-Hadrill, 2011). The insula was composed of shops including a bakery, a *taberna* and a dye workshop as well as domestic accommodation. The sewer tunnel is between 0.7 and 0.9 m wide, up to 3.10 m high, and has solid stone walls (Figure 10.2). Latrine shafts of the properties entered the sewer through the side walls, many of which are marked with encrustations of calcium phosphate precipitated from the sewage that flowed from the shafts. The sewer did not have a flow of water through it which carried away solid waste; it functioned more in the manner of an elongate septic tank. Solid material accumulated beneath the latrine shafts while liquid slowly drained away through a system of small tunnels. Presumably the sewer contents would have been dug out every 20 years or so. At the time of the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 the sewer was partly full.

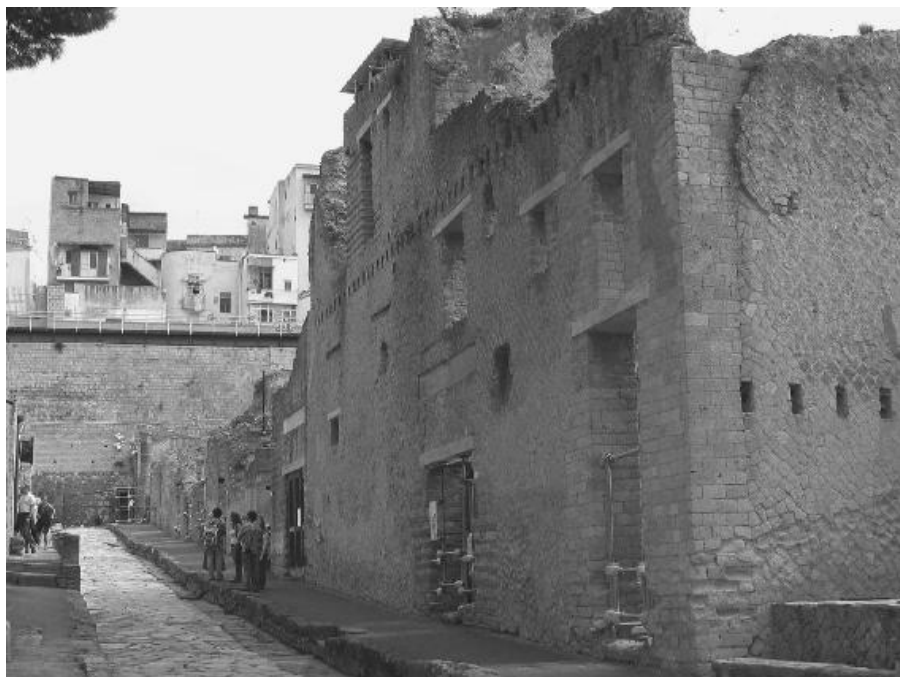


Figure 10.1 Apartment block of *Insula Occidentalis* II.

Photo © Mark Robinson & Erica Rowan.



Figure 10.2 The Cardo V sewer.

Photo © Mark Robinson & Erica Rowan.

The remains in the sewer had all accumulated before the eruption and had not been affected by its heat. The contents of the sewer were subsequently sealed by volcanic ash, which infiltrated the sewer. A series of stratigraphic 10 L

samples was taken from points along the length of the sewer. Each sample was floated in water onto a 0.5 mm mesh to recover the light fraction of biological material. The heavy residue was sieved over a 1.0 mm mesh to recover denser items. The flots and residues were sorted for biological remains, which were identified at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. A diverse range was present, and several means of preservation operated. The environment of the sewer was calcareous, so there was good survival of seashells and bones. The phosphate-rich semi-liquid organic contents of the sewer facilitated the calcium phosphate mineralization of much plant material. Carbonized plant remains, some burnt bones, and even a little undecayed organic material were also found.

The food remains in the sewer had entered it from two sources. First, there were items that had passed through the human digestive tract: small fish bones, splinters from larger mammal bones, some sea urchin spines, and numerous fruit seeds. Some of the bones showed signs of chewing and digestion. The other category of food material was waste thrown down the latrine shafts from food preparation and table leftovers. This included bones of domestic mammals, some showing signs of butchery, seashells, and carbonized plant remains.

Diet

The Cardo V sewer contained an astonishing array of macrobiological remains and in turn a wealth of information about the diets of those living in the insula above. A thorough examination of approximately 10% of the organic material has produced 84 and 27 different mineralized and carbonized plant taxa respectively, not all edible. Along with the animal remains they provide evidence for a diverse diet consisting of a few major staples supplemented by a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, seasonings (see [Table 10.1](#), [Table 10.2](#), and [Table 10.3](#)).

Table 10.1 Mineralized plant foodstuffs from the Cardo V Sewer, Herculaneum.

Scientific name	Common name	Quantity
cf. <i>Anethum graveolens</i>	dill	+
<i>Apium graveolens</i>	celery	+
<i>Brassica</i> sp.	cabbage or mustard	+
cf. <i>Celtis australis</i>	European hackberry	+
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	carob	+
<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	coriander	+
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	hazelnut	+
<i>Cucumis melo</i> or <i>C. sativus</i>	melon or cucumber	+
<i>Ficus carica</i>	fig	+++

<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	fennel	+
<i>Lens culinaris</i>	lentil	+
<i>Linum usitatissimum</i>	flax	+
<i>Malus</i> or <i>Pyrus</i> sp.	apple or pear	++
<i>Morus nigra</i>	black mulberry	+
<i>Mentha</i> sp.	mint	+
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	++
<i>Panicum miliaceum</i>	broomcorn millet	++
<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	opium poppy	++
<i>Piper nigrum</i>	black pepper	+
<i>Prunus</i> sp.	plum or cherry	+
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> (agg)	blackberry	+
<i>Setaria italica</i>	Italian/foxtail millet	++
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>dicoccum</i>	emmer wheat	+
<i>Vicia faba</i> var. <i>minuta</i>	field bean	+
<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	grape	++

+, 1–10 seeds or fragments.

++, 11–999 seeds or fragments.

+++, 1000+ seeds or fragments.

Table 10.2 Carbonized plant foodstuffs from the Cardo V sewer, Herculaneum.

Scientific name	Common name	Quantity
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	hazelnut	+
<i>Ficus carica</i>	fig	+
<i>Hordeum</i> sp.	barley	+
<i>Juglans regia</i>	common walnut	+
<i>Lens culinaris</i>	lentil	+
<i>Malus</i> or <i>Pyrus</i> sp.	apple or pear	+
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	+++
<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	date	+
<i>Pyrus</i> sp.	pear	+
<i>Setaria italica</i>	Italian/foxtail millet	+
<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	bread or macaroni wheat	+
<i>T. dicoccum</i>	emmer wheat	+
<i>T. monococcum</i>	einkorn	+
<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	grape	++

+, 1–10 seeds or fragments.

++, 11–999 seeds or fragments.

+++, 1000+ seeds or fragments.

Table 10.3 Edible faunal remains from the Cardo V sewer, Herculaneum.

	Scientific name	Common name

Bird	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	domestic fowl
Mammals	<i>Ovis aries</i>	sheep
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	pig	
Fish	Anguilliformes	eel
<i>Boops boops</i>	bogue	
<i>Chromis chromis</i>	damselfish	
Clupeids	pilchard/sardine	
<i>Diplodus</i> sp.	seabream	
<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	Mediterranean anchovy	
Gadids	cod and haddock	
<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>	blackspot seabream	
<i>P. erythrinus</i>	common pandora	
<i>Pagellus</i> sp.	seabream	
Pleuronectiformes	flatfish	
cf. Sciaenidae	drums	
Scophthalmidae	flatfish	
Sparidae	seabream	
<i>Spicara</i> sp.	picarel	
<i>Spondylisoma cantharus</i>	black seabream	
<i>Trachinus draco</i>	greater weever	
cf. <i>Trachurus</i>	Mediterranean horse	
<i>mediterraneus</i>	mackerel	
<i>Trachurus trachurus</i>	horse mackerel	
<i>Trisopterus luscus</i>	pouting	
Marine mollusks	<i>Patella</i> sp.	limpet
<i>Hexaplex trunculus</i>	banded dye-murex	
<i>Bolinus brandaris</i>	spiny dye-murex	
<i>Arca noae</i>	Noah's ark	
<i>Glycymeris</i> sp.	dog cockle	
<i>Mytilus</i> sp.	mussel	
<i>Chlamys opercularis</i>	queen scallop	
<i>Pecten jacobaeus</i>	pilgrim's scallop	
<i>Spondylus gaederopus</i>	thorny oyster	
Cardiidae	cockle	
<i>Chamelea gallina</i>	–	
<i>Venerupis decussata</i>	cross-cut carpet shell	
<i>Donax trunculus</i>	wedge shell	
<i>Donacilla cornea</i>	corneous wedge shell	
<i>Sepia</i> sp.	cuttlefish	
Other marine “shellfish”	cf. <i>Eriphia verrucosa</i>	warty crab
<i>Paracentrotus lividus</i>	stony sea urchin	

Work on the faunal remains is still in progress.

Although the taphonomic processes mentioned above will dictate the degree

and frequency of preservation, it can be observed that figs, grapes, olives, eggs, and shellfish were very commonly eaten foods. These foodstuffs appear in each stratigraphic layer of every quadrant, demonstrating that they were popular not only over space but over time. Other frequently occurring seeds included apple, pear, and opium poppy ([Figure 10.3](#)).

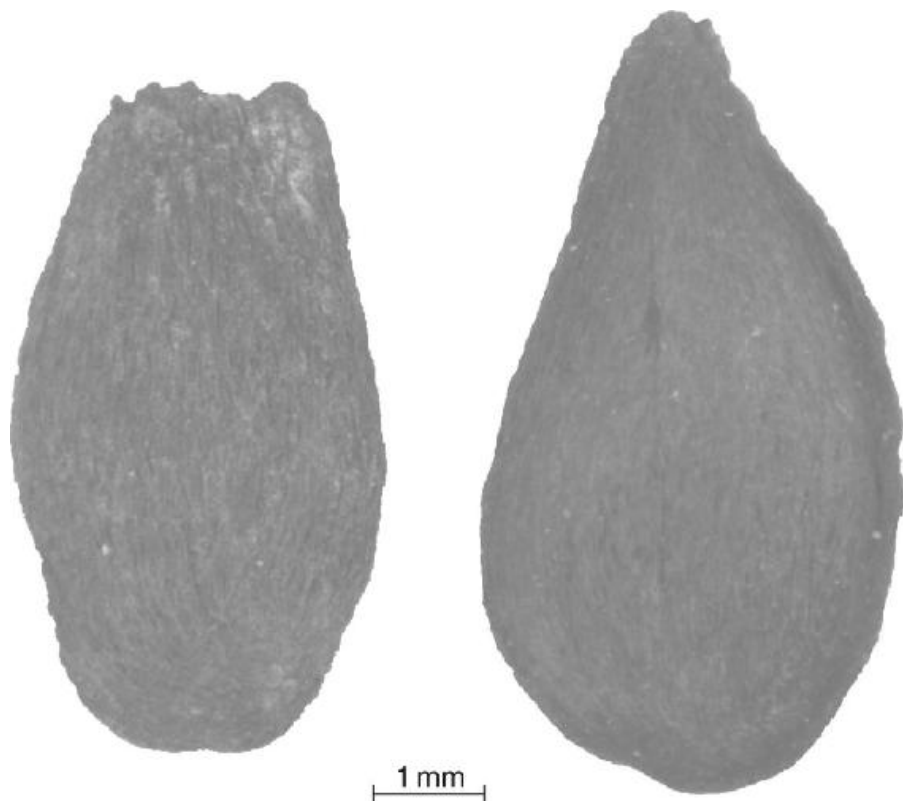


Figure 10.3 Mineralized *Malus* or *Pyrus* (apple or pear) seed (left); modern *Malus* seed (right).

Photo © Mark Robinson & Erica Rowan.

There is no doubt that bread and grains were the major source of carbohydrates in the Herculaneum diet. Recovered grain types include barley, bread wheat, emmer, and einkorn (see [Table 10.2](#)). However, the cereals are the rare instance where the finds from the sewer differ from historical and other archaeological records. The bakery of Sextus Patulcius Felix, located within the insula complex itself (*Ins. Or.* II.8), is a clear indication that bread was a part of daily life (Wallace-Hadrill, 2011, 276). The paucity of cereal grains recovered from the organic deposit is due primarily to reasons of taphonomy and not from any cultural or economic factors. Grain that is ground into flour will not be preserved, and the absence of chaff suggests that clean grain was brought into Herculaneum, having been parched, threshed, and winnowed elsewhere. The only grains to be found consistently throughout

the quadrants were mineralized foxtail and broomcorn millet. It is probable that they were prepared and consumed as porridge, in which some grains survived intact. Pliny states that millet grew well in Campania and attests to its use in making both bread and porridge (*Nat.* 18.24, 18.54–5).

The location of Herculaneum on the Bay of Naples in the fertile Campanian region gave the inhabitants of *Insula Orientalis* II access to a wide range of locally grown and cultivated legumes, nuts, fruits, vegetables, and seasonings to flavor and diversify their diets. The range of finds from the sewer attests to this abundance of variety. The legumes and nuts, including lentil, field bean, hazelnut, and walnut, are found mostly in the carbonized remains. Fruit and vegetable seeds, such as blackberry, cucumber or melon, and fruits from the *Prunus* genus, are restricted to the mineralized material. Finally, a wide variety of seasonings, including dill, fennel, coriander, mint, poppy, and mustard or cabbage seeds, were also recovered from the mineralized material (Figure 10.4). The plant component of the diet was complimented by a wide variety of small coastal fish and shellfish (Figure 10.5). The bones of pigs, sheep, and small birds were also found in the sewer, but in smaller numbers than the seafood, suggesting that seafood played a larger role in the diet than land-based sources of meat.



Figure 10.4 Mineralized *Anethum graveolens* (dill) seed (left); modern example (right).

Photo © Mark Robinson & Erica Rowan.

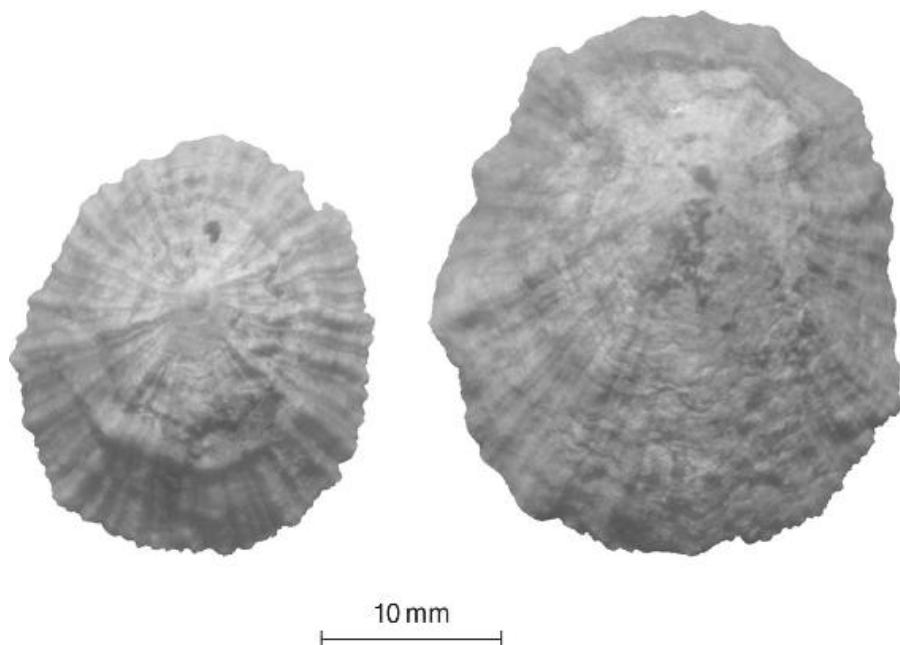


Figure 10.5 *Patella* sp. (limpet) shells from the sewer.

Photo © Mark Robinson & Erica Rowan.

Finally, one must consider the foodstuffs that were undoubtedly part of the diet but have not survived. Items composed of fats, protein, and soft tissue such as dairy products, boneless meat, and fruit flesh would have completely decomposed in the sewer. The rapid burial of Herculaneum by pyroclastic flows resulted in the carbonization of foods such as cheese and loaves of bread, but such finds are rare (Capasso, 2002, 126; Wallace-Hadrill, 2011, 293). Therefore, to ensure that the estimation of the diet is correct, one can compare the environmental material to the human skeletal remains. For the past three decades, the approximately 350 skeletons found on Herculaneum's ancient beach front have been studied for evidence of health and diet (Bisel, 1987; Petrone, Fattore, & Monetti, 2002). Analysis of the trace minerals zinc, copper, and strontium has produced results that corroborate the environmental remains.¹ The medium to high levels of zinc and the high levels of strontium in the bones point to a diet high in marine fish, crustaceans, and legumes but low in red meat (Petrone, Fattore, & Monetti, 2002, 78–80). Together, the findings from the environmental and skeletal material suggest a diet that was both diverse and nutritious.

Daily Life

The deposition of the biological material into the Cardo V sewer, whether as human or as kitchen waste, represents only the final stage of a complex chain of social, cultural, and economic interactions that brought the food items into the apartments. Consequently, one can use the total assemblage to reconstruct some of these interactions, including cooking and ritual practices, socioeconomic status, and market practices.

There is a widely held belief that Romans who lived in apartments did not cook and instead purchased all their food from the numerous *tabernae* spread strategically throughout the town (McKay, 1998, 86; Stambaugh, 1988, 200). The nearby town of Pompeii contains dozens of food *tabernae* and there is no evidence of upper-floor kitchens. However, the presence of kitchen waste in the Cardo V sewer suggests that people were preparing and cooking food in the upper-floor apartments. The Roman practice of situating latrines near kitchens meant that the latrine shaft served the multifunctional purpose of toilet pipe and waste bin (DeKind, 1998, 99–106, 139, 177; see Ault in this volume). Non-digestible items such as animal bones, eggshell, and seashells are easily recognizable as kitchen waste. The presence of carbonized and mineralized millet and lentils, which cannot be eaten raw, implies that cooking, at least on a small scale, was taking place in the apartments. Only *Ins. Or. II.7* has an upper floor kitchen, as identified by a masonry hearth, but it is probable that cooking, perhaps simply with a tripod and masonry slab, was taking place elsewhere in the insula.

Burnt offerings to the *Lares*, household gods, are often found buried in gardens at Pompeii, but in the absence of green space the residents of *Ins. Or. II* perhaps deposited ritually burnt material in the sewer. Items such as carbonized grape and fig pips, barley, walnut, date, and stone pine bracts have also been found in burnt offering deposits in Pompeii (Scott, 2009, 143; Robinson, 2005, 112–4).

The inhabitants of this insula, through their choice of staple foods, demonstrate a clear cultural affinity with the wider Roman community. As such, they benefited from Rome's far-reaching trade networks and, in keeping with Roman social customs, used expensive imports to demonstrate their wealth and social standing (Livarda, 2011, 143–4). In terms of the biological remains, this can best be seen through the retrieval of a date seed and two peppercorns (Figure 10.6). Although date palms grew in Italy they did not produce fruit, and subsequently dates had to be imported from areas such as Syria, Judea, or Egypt (Dalby, 2000a, 169). Peppercorns came from even farther abroad. Black pepper is native to Southwest India, and Roman ships would follow the monsoon winds to the port of Muziris, near modern Cranganore. Although the return journey from India back to the nearby port of Puteoli could be done mostly by water transport, it could only take place

approximately once a year, making pepper an extremely expensive commodity (Cappers, 2006, 139–40). At 848 m², the living space inside II.7, if it is a single individual apartment, would be equal in size to some of Herculaneum's larger atrium type houses (Andrews, 2006, 1:111–2). It is probably that one of the two peppercorns recovered had been purchased by these occupants. This is supported by the presence of several high-status finds in the apartment, including numerous bronze objects and a silver ring (Andrews, 2006, 2:353–4).

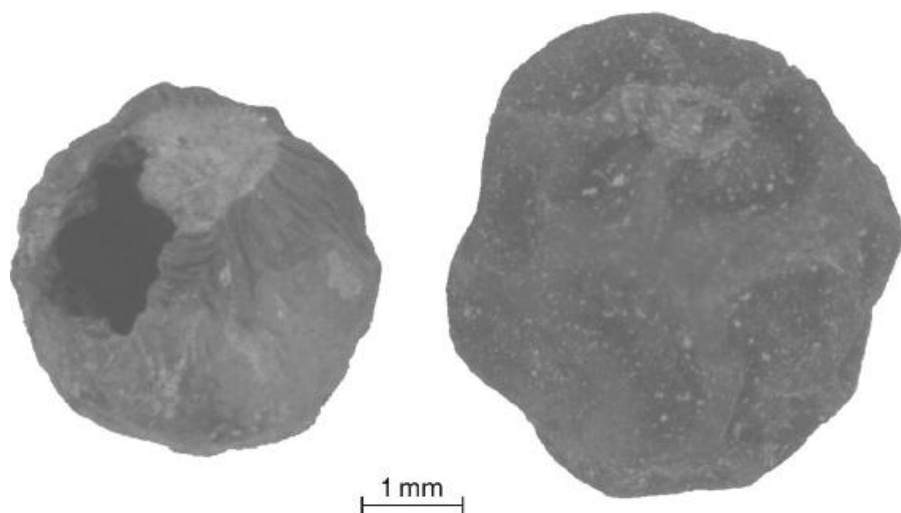


Figure 10.6 *Piper nigrum* (black pepper) seed (left); modern example (right).

Photo © Mark Robinson & Erica Rowan.

Although excellent indicators of socioeconomic status, these imports represent an almost negligible percentage of the biological remains collected from the Cardo V sewer. The vast majority of the botanical and faunal material was likely grown and collected in the Vesuvian area. While the cereal grains could have been imported from Egypt, items such as figs, grapes, and herbs would have been cultivated or gathered from the fertile plains around Mount Vesuvius.

Last, the shellfish finds have produced evidence for food procurement and purchase. The shellfish assemblage is represented entirely by small coastal animals such as limpets, wedge shells, and sea urchins, which lived either along the beach or in the shallow waters just off the coast of Herculaneum. The sea in front of the town was shallow, with a depth of only 0.5–0.7 m, making collection possible year round (Sigurdsson & Carey, 2002, 55). This edible assemblage is frequently populated by shellfish too small to have been consumed, often less than one centimeter in length. The mixture of edible and inedible material is indicative of drag netting, probably from the beach. Fishing nets and bronze tools used to repair the nets have been found in Herculaneum (Deiss, 1989, 102). It is clear from the presence of these small

shells in the sewer that seafood was not cleaned prior to its purchase by the inhabitants of the insula.²

FURTHER READING

A very useful review of which biological remains survive under which conditions is given by Campbell, Moffett, & Straker (2011). Further details of archaeobotany and crop processing are given by Pearsall (2000) and Hillman (1981), while the origins of the food plants of the Ancient World are covered by Zohary & Hopf (2000). Techniques of archaeozoology and dietary evidence from animal bones are given by O'Connor (2000). Problems with the analysis of Roman food plants preserved by different means on the same site are discussed by Robinson (2006). Roman food remains from the Bay of Naples are introduced by Jashemski & Meyer (2002), while the archaeology of Herculaneum is presented by Wallace-Hadrill (2011).

NOTES

- ¹ Although stable isotope analysis provides more accurate dietary data, at the moment the Herculaneum and Pompeii skeletons have not been tested for isotopic carbon or nitrogen (Lazer, 2009, 214).
- ² It is possible that the inhabitants collected seafood themselves and also brought the uncleaned material home in bulk.

CHAPTER 11

Anthropology and Food Studies

Sarah Hitch

Food has a special status in anthropology; along with verbal language, cooking food is what distinguishes human beings from the primates, with whom they share 99% of their genetic makeup. Cooking has even been suggested as a basis for the relatively strong human male–female bonds: cooking delays food consumption, rendering food left under the protection of females liable to theft and therefore requiring the protection of men (Wrangham *et al.*, 1999). Food preparation and consumption is a “cultural universal,” a feature, like language, shared by all human societies, but the food system (what is eaten, when, where, and with whom) is dictated by the cultural rules of any given group and, as such, is often treated as a sort of window into their overarching beliefs and values, particularly social composition and gender roles.

Defining Anthropology

Anthropology is the integrated study of other cultures in an effort to understand better how the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of human beings are socially expressed and integrated. The definition of anthropology (and its relation to sociology) circles around fine disciplinary distinctions between the social science of comparing cultures or a humanistic attempt at self-awareness through the study of others. The Greek term *anthropologos* “talking about man” is used negatively by Aristotle with reference to gossip (*EN* 1125a5); “anthropology” refers to the study of human beings as early as the sixteenth century, before becoming widely recognized as a method of study in the late nineteenth century. Much of the work undertaken on food in antiquity follows guidelines set by contemporary anthropology, a field in which a general division is now drawn between biological anthropology and social or cultural anthropology. Biological anthropology is the study of the evolution of the human race from primates until the present day; as regards food, the focus falls primarily on nutrition, changes in food habits, and ecological factors relating to food acquisition and consumption. “Food habits” is a useful phrase popularized by the American anthropologist Margaret Mead in her studies of nutrition in the United States as “the culturally standardized set of behaviors in regard to food manifested by individuals who have been reared within a given cultural tradition. These behaviors are seen as systematically interrelated with other standardized behaviors in the same culture” (Mead, 1943, 18). “Social anthropology” is the

traditionally British branch of anthropology in which scholars observe, categorize, and compare the communally recognized and accepted practices of individual societies, usually “small-scale” groups, in an attempt to understand cultural diversity.

Social anthropology comes about largely out of the late nineteenth century comparative studies influenced by reports of foreign cultures generated by colonial ventures. This first generation of anthropologists, sometimes called “armchair anthropologists” since they relied on missionary and administrative reports, set out methodically to collect and collate specific data about foreign cultural customs to show the evolution of human culture from primitive stages. This kind of work was carried out almost simultaneously by scholars in England, France, Germany, and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Different strands of anthropology developed locally, with different “founding fathers” and slightly different emphases. A distinction is drawn between the development of European social anthropology and cultural anthropology in the USA, the latter being shaped by a stronger notion that customs and beliefs are culturally specific. This theory of “cultural relativism” was championed by the “father” of American anthropology, Franz Boas, a German geographer who immigrated to New York in 1887. Although socio-cultural anthropology is now considered to be an integrated discipline, studies of food in antiquity informed by anthropological theory were mainly produced by British and French scholars in the mid-late twentieth century when such a distinction still held. Since biological necessity, at least to some degree, underwrites any community’s relations with food, however much they are shaped by uniquely local practice and belief, a hard line between biological and social anthropology cannot be drawn. Nonetheless, a gap remains between theories based on environmental pressures and those proposing social structures as the dominant factor in cultural food systems, which is in turn reflected in studies of food in antiquity.

The Birth of Social Anthropology

Social anthropology may be said to begin with the first professor of a named chair in this subject, Sir James Frazer, a Classicist at the University of Cambridge, who also published editions of Pausanias and Ovid’s *Fasti*. In his landmark comparative study, *The Golden Bough: a Study in Comparative Religion* (1890), Frazer attempted to create a systematized account of the social uses of myth in different cultures. Drawing on the reports of colonial missionaries, he outlined a progression from “primitive” magic, through a stage of religion, to the development of science. Like his mentor, Edward Burnett Tylor, and colleague William Robertson-Smith, Frazer saw human history as an evolutionary arc leading towards European cultural superiority, an ethnocentric reflection of the contemporary impact of both Darwinian theory and colonial imperialism. The comparative method, as developed by

Tylor, is used by Frazer to fill in the gaps in Classical sources on rituals, particularly the worship of Diana at Nemi in southern Italy. Frazer treated cultural traditions as meaningful symbols that could be decoded to understand belief systems; however much his work was tainted by ethnocentrism, both his holistic, “outsider” approach and attempt to codify and interpret cultural symbols remain key tenets of anthropology today, alongside the intensive experiential component pioneered by Bronisław Malinowski. Frazer’s reputation as the founding father of social anthropology was such that Edmund Leach, one of the foremost British anthropologists of the twentieth century, began the inaugural lectures in honor of Malinowski at the London School of Economics in 1959 with the comment that “The contemporary social anthropologist is all too well aware that he knows much less than Frazer imagined that he knew for certain” (Leach, 1971, preface, v).

For Frazer and his contemporaries, anthropological interest in food centered around commensality, an aspect still regarded as central to any group’s food habits, although without the concept of animal totems found throughout scholarly discourse until the second world war. Robertson-Smith, to whom Frazer dedicated *The Golden Bough*, put shared meals at the heart of social structures, which he believed to be the formative and definitive factor in human relations. “The act of eating and drinking together is the solemn and stated expression of the fact that all those who share the meal are brethren, and that all the duties of friendship and brotherhood are implicitly acknowledged in their common act” (Robertson-Smith, 1889, 247). He finds the importance of food as a reflection of the biological need to nourish infants, which is then extended to shared meals as the bond between the kinship groups that form societies: “After the child is weaned, his flesh and blood continue to be nourished and renewed by the food which he shares with his commensals, so that commensality can be thought of (1) as confirming or even (2) as constituting kinship in a very real sense” (Robertson-Smith, 1889, 257). Robertson-Smith’s views had a considerable impact upon Émile Durkheim, the founding father of sociology, whose book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915) remains one of the most influential works of the twentieth century.

Although the evolutionary progress of human society espoused by the nineteenth-century forebears of modern anthropology remains something of an embarrassment in the history of scholarship, the concept of earlier “primitive” lifestyles predating the development of civilization owes something to ancient views of the development of their own societies, a mythology that is often expressed in terms of food. In Greek and Roman myth, earlier generations ate naturally occurring food or very simple fare, which represented the beneficence of gods before the need for agriculture burdened mankind with a lifetime of toil (e.g. Hes. *Op.* 110–20). Under the influence of expanded trade during the Roman empire, simple, natural diets

could symbolize a morally superior way of life before the corrupting influence of eastern luxuries, for example the meal served by Baucis and Philemon (Ov. *Met.* 8.667–81). In contrast to the Victorian attempts to describe cultural progress, ancient Greek and Roman mythology depicted the simpler lifestyle, and diet that characterizes it, as a superior way of life, due to a happier relationship with the gods who control nature, and freedom from exposure to corrupting foreign customs.

The “Evolutionary” approach of Frazer and Robertson-Smith gave way to the “functionalist” approach of Bronisław Malinowski, a Polish immigrant who attended the London School of Economics, where he eventually held the chair in anthropology after the First World War. Malinowski’s detailed surveys of the small-scale Trobriand culture on a relatively isolated archipelago set the standard for much of twentieth-century British social anthropology. For Malinowski, social institutions could only be understood by taking into account the way customs satisfy the needs of living human beings. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: an Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (1922), for which James Frazer wrote the preface, Malinowski emphasizes the social use of food to display status, particularly the ceremonial display of accumulated stockpiles. “Naturally, like all animals, human or otherwise, civilized or savage, the Trobrianders enjoy their eating as one of the chief pleasures of life ... it is this ... which makes for the value of food in the eyes of the natives. This value again makes accumulated food a symbol, and a vehicle of power. Hence the need for storing and displaying it. Value is not the result of utility and rarity, intellectually compounded, but is the result of a sentiment grown round things, which, though satisfying human needs, are capable of evoking emotions” (Malinowski, 1922, 132).

Food: a Mode of Thought

After the Second World War, anthropology was revolutionized by the theoretical framework of Claude Lévi-Strauss, a French scholar who, along with his Parisian predecessor Durkheim in sociology, has shaped much of the scholarship that has come after him. Leach remarked “Even if time should show that some of the items of evidence have been misplaced, the fundamental method of Lévi-Strauss’s analysis is an innovation from which there can be no retreat” (Leach, 1964, 114). Lévi-Strauss fed ethnographic data from his fieldwork on tribal groups in North and South America into an abstract model that incorporated all variables attested in any culture as part of a coherent human system. Ritual actions, that is to say any regularly repeated activities recognized by the community, act as a “language” that can be decoded to reveal inner structures of thought that dictate behavior. These same patterns not only contain or embed the thought processes behind them, but they can also express/manifest contradictions therein. Adapting the type of

modeling used in linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure, Lévi-Strauss proposed that human societies express binary oppositions, in cosmological and sociological conceptualization, through cultural habits. Human brains are innately hardwired to organize their responses to the natural world in terms analogous to, and related to, language. These categories reflect not how the world is organized, but how the human brain perceives that it is.

Food was one of Lévi-Strauss's most important areas of research, as shown in the translated titles of the first three volumes of *Mythologiques*, his groundbreaking collection of papers: *The Raw and the Cooked* (Engl. edn 1969 [1st French edn 1964]), *From Honey to Ashes* (Engl. edn 1973 [1966]), and *The Origin of Table Manners* (Engl. edn 1978 [1968]). Adapting a linguistic triangle model of vowels and consonants, he constructed a "culinary triangle" relating the "cultural" transformation of food from raw to cooked and the "natural" transformation of rotten foods. Further distinctions can be made between types of cooking: roasted food is directly exposed to fire, the "non-mediatized conjunction," and as such expresses the natural side of a nature/culture opposition, while boiling food is a two-step process of cultural mediation: the food is immersed in water, and both water and food are contained in a receptacle. "Underlying the main triangle, there is, then, a double opposition between *processed/non-processed*, on the one hand, and *culture/nature*, on the other" (Lévi-Strauss (1978) 478).

In studies of food in antiquity, the impact of Lévi-Strauss has been overwhelming, particularly in the work of scholars based at the Parisian Centre Louis Gernet: *Recherches Comparées sur les Sociétés Anciennes* established by the Classicist Jean-Pierre Vernant in 1964. Vernant and his colleagues collectively brought food habits as expressed in myth and ritual to the forefront of Classical studies. Taking the work of Marcel Detienne as exemplary, when *The Gardens of Adonis* (1977a) was originally published in France in 1972, it was hailed by Lévi-Strauss himself (Lévi-Strauss, 1972). Edmund Leach praised it as a "formally orthodox structuralist exercise in the strict Lévi-Straussian manner" and a worthy revision of the conclusions drawn by Frazer about Adonis, one of the most important examples in his theory of the "dying god" (Leach, 1978, 684). Adapting the "culinary triangle" of Lévi-Strauss, Detienne outlines a botanical code underlying some of the best-known myths that acts as a symbolic reflection of Greek notions of mortality and immortality. Mortals eat cultivated foods, either plants that have been purposefully grown, or the cooked meat from animals, as opposed to the raw foods eaten by animals or the smoke of sacrifice thought to reach the gods. So, the consumption of cultivated foodstuffs represents culture over nature. Plants can be further classified as "dry," those that are close to the sun and incorruptible, like the spice myrrh, which is burned as an offering to gods, and "wet" plants such as lettuce, which is cold, raw, and susceptible to rot. Detienne uses extensive evidence from a range of sources to support the

notion that spices function symbolically as a “vertical axis” between the world of death below and of immortality above, and a “horizontal axis” between men and women. One of his most prominent examples is the story of the birth and death of Adonis. Like Lévi-Strauss’s use of all known cultural variables in the construction of a “triangle,” Detienne uses multiple versions of the Adonis story and references to myrrh and lettuce in ancient sources to illuminate the symbolic meaning of these dry and wet foods. In sum, Adonis is born from the myrrh tree, the divine transformation of his mother, Myrrha, and becomes the subject of erotic rivalry between Aphrodite, goddess of love, and Persephone, queen of the underworld, before being killed by a boar while hiding in a lettuce bed. The dry spice myrrh was used in wedding ceremonies and thought to be an aphrodisiac, while the wet plant lettuce was thought to cause impotence. In this way, the different plants differently mediate between mortals and gods, life and death, and men and women (Detienne, 1977a, 60–71).

Much of the work of the “Paris School” depends on the cultural assimilation of animals and women (e.g. Hes. *Theog.* 590–615; Vernant, 1981, 59–60), which they take to be a basic element of Greek belief that is expanded into the expression of acceptable gender roles and relationships through food habits, an association found in numerous anthropological studies of food systems. Both eating and sex are pleasurable activities necessary to perpetuate human life, but also reflect human vulnerability. Eating and sex are usually tightly regulated by accepted social customs unique to any given community, many of which promote a host of associations between women and food as the objects of male consumption (see, e.g., Leach, 1964, 1114; Fieldhouse, 1986, 173; Fiddes, 1991, 144).

The emphasis of Lévi-Strauss and other scholars working with the structuralist model on the consumption of raw food, as opposed to refinement through cooking, is found throughout ethnographic writing in antiquity, beginning with the travels of Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Odysseus’ displacement in a netherworld between Troy and Ithaca is expressed through the food habits of those he visits, such as the Cyclops Polyphemus, who does not practice agriculture, drinks milk, and eats human beings (Hom. *Od.* 9.290–9; Vidal-Naquet, 1986). The ability to produce grain and wine, products of technology, is one of the trademark signs of Greek civilization (see, e.g., Hom. *Od.* 13.244–6), the absence or replacement of which with wild or raw foods, including milk, is often cited as a distinguishing characteristic of other, non-Greek communities. For example, Herodotus points out that, among other strange customs, the Scythians drink milk, undiluted wine, and, when swearing oaths, wine mixed with blood (Hdt. 4.2, 70; 6.84). Cannibalism is a frequent motif for enemy groups and those living outside the boundaries of the known world: the first century Greek geographer Strabo reports the work of Ephorus, a fourth-century historian, who divided

the Scythians into two groups, a good group who drank milk, and a bad group who ate human flesh (Str. 7.3.9; Hartog, 1988, 168). Anthropologists have been equally fascinated by the possibility of cannibalism, a taboo that, aside from some well-known examples in the context of starvation, is still today as much the preserve of ethnocentric myth-making as it was in antiquity (Arens, 1979; Isaac, 2004, 210 ff.; Lindenbaum, 2004).

Food: a Mode of Production

In the study of food, only a subtle distinction can be drawn between biological and social anthropology, because all human beings need to find or produce food to eat; on the most basic level, food habits can always be reduced to this biological necessity. In other areas of culture, sharper oppositions can be drawn between theories prioritizing environmental over psychological factors. These “materialist” and “ecological” theoretical frameworks, initially derived from the views of Karl Marx, find that modes of production determine the cultural status of food and eating (see Morrison, 2006, 108; Antonio, 2011, 135–6). Such a premise underlies Malinowski’s “functionalist” characterization of the food habits of the Trobriand islanders, but is very much recessed in structuralist theories, in which, rather than actual practices, perceptions of the natural world are the determining factor. A model of the ancient Greek economy using principles of subsistence food production and surplus market production became widely influential through the work of Moses Finley (Finley, 1973), following in the footsteps of Louis Gernet, the associate of Durkheim in Paris for whom Vernant named his Centre (Gernet, 1909). The economic argument, such as that promoted by Finley for ancient Greece, is expanded to emphasize ecological factors in the influential work of the American anthropologist Marvin Harris, who responded to the structural analysis of Jewish dietary prohibitions by Mary Douglas with an “ecological” argument about the biological unsuitability of rearing pigs in ancient Palestine (Douglas, 1966; Harris, 1985, 67–79). An important premise for such “materialist” approaches to food habits is the disproportionate relationship between the highly wasteful and expensive task of animal husbandry and the nutritional value provided by meat, which is not essential to human survival, but acquires a high status through its restricted accessibility and the control over distribution by social or political authorities (see, e.g., Garnsey, 1988, 1999).

One of the interesting features of the aristocratic status of feasting in Greek and Roman societies is the creation of a literature circulating around food, such as the work of Athenaeus, the late second- or early third-century compiler of anecdotes and information about food (see Braund & Wilkins, 2000; Murray in this volume). “The Philosophers at Supper” is an important witness to the social stratification of Greek and Roman food habits in the anthropological work of Jack Goody, one of the most dominant voices in

materialist studies of food (Goody, 1982, 104–5). Goody merges his fieldwork on oral traditions in Northern Ghana with a consideration of the relationship between food production and political systems. While Lévi-Strauss saw cooking practices as a mediation of the binary opposition between nature and culture, Goody emphasizes the integration of nature and culture through agricultural technology. For Goody, hierarchical or regional factors, such as climate, biology, and other external factors, are determinants: societies with advanced agricultural techniques, such as the plough or irrigation, as opposed to crude implements, reflect social differences through food production because they are able to produce enough food for large-scale feasting, the most characteristic “high-status” use of food. Differentiated access to resources, such as “cookbooks” or texts like “The Philosophers at Supper,” feed into the use of food in class differentiation. As a result, high-status cooking is associated with men, while low-status cooking is done by women. “The Egyptian tombs demonstrate the arrival of the prerequisites of the *haute cuisine*. But it was in Greece and Rome, when logographic and syllabic forms of writing had given way to the easy art of the alphabet that here, as in so many spheres of human action, cooking was embodied in the written form so as to create a core of practices and recipes that could be subjected to further elaboration in the kitchens and libraries of the rich” (Goody, 1982, 102; for a critique, see Nadeau in this volume).

FURTHER READING

Useful introductions to anthropological theory and terminology in the twentieth century can be found in the work of Leach (2000), Harris (2001), and Morris (2012). An online bibliography of anthropological work on food is maintained by the Illinois State University: <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/rtdirks/>

For discussions of the place of Frazer and the Cambridge “ritualists” in the history of Classical scholarship, Csapo (2005) 30–44, 132–44, also with an extended discussion of structuralism and its aftermath: 181–301. Selections from the writings of Tylor, Robertson-Smith, Frazer, and Durkheim can be found in the work of Carter (2003). An interesting modern discussion of commensality is given by Lincoln (1989, 75–88). Fiddes (1991) gives a gendered response to structuralist readings of the various social uses of meat and the scholarly bias towards meat consumption as exemplary of all food habits. For a brief discussion of the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant and the “Paris School,” see Hitch (Sacrifice) in this volume. The important work of Douglas on the symbolism of food is most accessible in her 1971 essay “Deciphering a meal.”

On the issues pertaining to the development and transmission of the views of Karl Marx in anthropological theory, see Bloch (1983). Two particularly influential studies on food influenced by Marxist thinking are those by Mintz

(1985) and Bourdieu (1986).

Numerous studies of food in antiquity are informed by anthropological theory: good starting points are the work of Wilkins & Hill (2006), Garnsey (1999), Howe (2008), and McInerney (2010).

CHAPTER 12

Art and Images: Feasting in Ancient Greece and Rome¹

François Lissarrague

The representation of the banquet, of the *symposion* or the *comos* that accompanied it, is one of the richest and most common iconographic themes in the figurative repertoire, especially in Greece in Attic pottery and reliefs, on which we focus here.

These images were the subject of early detailed studies, aimed at a better understanding of the convivial practices and wine culture of ancient Greece and Rome. The relationship between these representations and actual practice is not photographic; while the images refer to the real world to which they belong, they are also themselves a development of these practices. Painters and sculptors made choices, which it is up to the modern exegete to identify and interpret as accurately as possible.

Image, Document, Monument

These images have been seen as documents that indirectly inform us about ways the *symposion* and banquet were conducted. The details of implements, furniture, drinking cups, and mixing vessels is indeed accurate enough in many cases to allow a number of *realia* to be listed, as sometimes confirmed by archaeology and the study of material culture. The documentary value of these images is both precious and indisputable. However, research should not remain at this level, which was for a long time the level of “antiquaries” such as Dom Bernard de Montfaucon in the eighteenth century (1719–1724). This erudite Benedictine had the immense task of editing the church fathers, especially Saint John Chrysostom. To understand the details of these homilies, Montfaucon felt that one must also be familiar with the profane authors and everything concerning the material life of antiquity: clothing, food, modes of travel, furniture, and so on. He was one of the first systematically to use figurative documentation to fill gaps in our knowledge. The massive undertaking that he published between 1719 and 1724 does just that. For Montfaucon, the engravings he published, from drawings he purchased or had made, had a direct and immediate testimonial value for antiquity. Unlike the manuscripts he consulted in search of the best version of the text, images, in his view, were not deformed by scribes. Coins, statues, and reliefs were direct sources for him. We know that things are not so simple, and that images demand as much critical attention as texts. But this sense of immediacy

remains strong in our minds, and gives the image an illustrative and documentary status that is little questioned.

Yet these images are not the drawings or prints we see in books, but the decorations of objects and monuments, which had a particular function in the first place and must be studied from this point of view. These are vases and reliefs, which may bear one or more images, which in turn sometimes refer to the banquet. We will begin with these, without attempting to exhaust all facets of the subject, but with a view to indicating some of the main traits to orient research.

The Reflexivity of the Banqueting-Vessels

One of the most abundant sources of information with respect to the imagery of the *symposion* is furnished by Greek pottery, especially but not exclusively Attic. The only vessel that emphasizes the correlation between *komos*, banquet, and sacrifice is a Boeotian pyxis preserved in Berlin (Altes Museum, F1727; Schmitt Pantel, 2011, Fig. 26). This connection between three stages of a social practice central to the Archaic and Classical periods is rarely shown, because, while it is important to us as historians of cultural practices, it went without saying for the ancients; there is little point in stressing what everyone knows. In fact this vase constructs a triple thematic association: besides the three stages just noted, we also see on the lid a hunting scene and on the three feet of the pyxis two levels of additional scenes. In the upper level, we see successively on the different feet of the pyxis Perseus, a Gorgon pursuing him, and another Gorgon and Medusa beheaded; in the lower level are athletes, similarly arranged on the vessel. For the ancient viewer, it was not the succession of three stages of convivial ritual that mattered, but the accumulation of images associated with hunting, athletic competitions, and the exploits of a major hero with this collective practice.

In Attic pottery sacrifice and the banquet are rarely associated, but the bringing in of meat is frequently indicated by the representation of a young *pais* bearing a joint of meat to its recipient. What interests the image makers is the identification of a shared, egalitarian space. The shape of the object determines the organization of the image, which in turn reflects the convivial space. The most common solution is to have in a circle, on the two outer sides of a cup, a series of banqueting couches. The disc of the cup provides a spatial equivalent to the circle of drinkers in the *andron*. On the mixing bowl (*krater*), it is often placed under a handle, as a starting point of the distribution of the wine (Lissarrague, 1987a, Fig. 9; Schmitt Pantel, 2011, Fig. 25). The medallion is reserved for an abbreviated form of the same device: a single banqueting couch, or the mixing-bowl (*krater*), which are sufficient in themselves to evoke the entire *symposion* (Lissarrague, 1987a, Figs 19–21 and 99, 101–2). Thus, for example, on a cup of Douris ([Figure 12.1](#)) the *krater* is

set near the handle, and drinkers are arranged in a circle on mats that go around the entire cup. Beneath this line, the painter has represented in silhouette a series of vessels which are both a reminder of the objects used in the *symposion*, and the equivalent of an ornamental, decorative band: the vessels are thus presented in a double register, as utilitarian objects, in the hands of drinkers, and as an ornamental frieze, reinforcing the reflexivity of the image. In other cases, the cylindrical surface of the *kraters* is used to distribute the drinkers on the side of the vase, itself at the center of the banquet hall, thus producing a mirror effect between the drinkers and their own image on the *krater*.



Figure 12.1 Attic red-figure cup by Douris. Rome, Vatican. c. 500 BC. Museum Etruscum Gregorianum, 1842.

The vase painters widely exploited these reflexive games; images of vases on vases is a common motif of sympotic imagery. It is a visual equivalent of the well-known reflexivity of melic poetry, sung at the banquet, which often takes its own operation as a starting point. In image one sees the *krater* among the drinkers, as in the games of handling the vessels. Some of these games were forms of entertainment at the banquet, as the game of *kottabos*, in which drops

of wine were thrown at a balanced target that had to be hit and reversed. Another game (*askoliasmos*) was to balance on a skin (*askos*) made slippery with oil; here again, the idea was to experiment with the limits of equilibrium and the effects of drunkenness. Other manipulations of vessels were less explicitly codified, but involved the same balancing games and juggling (Lissarrague, 1987a). The vase painters often showed a *cômastes*, on the way to the *symposion*, bringing a variety of utensils for the banquet: baskets, drinking vessels, pouring vessels, skins, *amphorae*, and musical instruments.

These objects form a sort of catalogue, a moving inventory of the elements of the *symposion*: wine, music, dance, song, and eroticism. They constitute a relatively small vocabulary of images, but their potential combinations are infinitely varied. Sometimes painters associated the movement of the *comos* with the stability of the *krater*, placed in the center of the circle of drinkers. This could have a paradoxical result, as on a cup in Munich (Figure 12.2) that shows at the center of the scene a column-krater flanked by two drinkers; the one on the left holds a *skyphos* up to his face and reaches his hand toward the mixed liquid in the *krater*. The one on the right, bearded, holds a *barbiton* (a stringed instrument) over the *krater*. The two objects thus highlighted by both *cômastes*, *skyphos* and *barbiton*, form a visual phrase, simultaneously expressing drinking and singing, the two basic elements of the *symposion*. Wine and music mingle around the *krater*, while to both sides of this core group, two other groups gesticulate. On the right a bearded man, *rhyton* (drinking horn) in hand, moves toward a beautiful young man carrying a wineskin: these two objects refer to the pure, unmixed wine. On the left a group of three young men is accompanied by inscriptions proclaiming, among other things, “*Dorotheos kalos naichi*” – “Dorotheos is certainly beautiful.” The beauty of young people is one of the pleasures of the *symposion*; imagery tells us this just as does lyric poetry. Here for example, the young man to the right of this group lets his clothes drop, as if to emphasize his strong, athletic body.



Figure 12.2 Attic red-figure cup by the Epeleios painter. Munich, Antikensammlung 2619A. c. 510 BC. Furtwängler-Reichhold, pl. 155, 1904.

This desirable masculinity is revealed by the painter, underlined by inscriptions circulating around the bodies represented. The festive character of

the whole is reinforced by the garlands worn by all the *cômastai*, except one who is playing a lyre near the *krater*. He is wearing a *sakkos*, a sort of cap of rather feminine type, which characterizes an Ionian mode associated with the name of the poet Anacreon. This orientalizing feminization is typical of the games of identity that unfolded in the *symposion*, where for a limited time the citizen became something else through the experience of wine (Frontisi & Lissarrague, 1983; Boardman & Kurtz, 1986). Beneath the handles of the cup an *amphora* for transport is set on one side, symmetrical with the *askos* held by a *cômastês*, and on the other an illuminated altar. This last spatial element is rare in the iconography of the *symposion*, although it is appropriate, since the *symposion* always commenced with offerings of libations. But here the altar takes on a double value, and can be linked with both the *comos* scene just analyzed and the scene depicted on the other side of the cup, representing Peleus seizing the Nereid Thetis, while her sisters seek the protection of the gods by fleeing to the altar. From one side to the other the iconographic theme has changed: one has passed from one space to another, from the human practice of *symposion* and *comos* to a mythical episode in which men and gods intersect. The altar is at the hinge point between these two worlds and can slip from one space to another. We understand better the spatial complexity of the cup and the paradox noted at the outset: the *comos* scene is characterized by the dynamics of movement and displacement, while simultaneously fixed around the *krater*, already placed on the floor, anchored in space, like the altar. The image brings separate spaces and times into a single vision; more than a reproduction of the real scene, it is a synthesis of it, and shows what mattered in the eyes of the painter: the collective movement, the mixture of wine and water in the *krater*, and the exchange with the gods at the altar.

This manner of combining spaces in a single image, combining themes on a single cup, is characteristic of the fluidity of these representations. Each cup can wear three images, two outside, which complement or differ from one side to the other, and one on the medallion, which shortens a more complex scene or proposes another. Passing from the exterior to the interior of the Munich cup, a *krater* is encountered, but this time it is a satyr who is nearby. He is crouched, holding in both hands a huge wineskin from which he pours the contents into the *krater*. The vessel is garlanded, as is the satyr, whose open mouth proclaims "*hedus oinos*," "wine is sweet." Another inscription runs parallel along the tondo: "*Silanos terpon*," "Silenus delighted," while on his back and between his feet one reads "*Epeleios kalos*," "Epeleios is beautiful," which is already written on the outside of the cup above the *krater*. From the outside to the inside of the cup, certain elements are repeated – the *krater*, the praise – but the difference between the elegance of the *cômaistes* and the obscenity of the tumescent satyr is obvious. We have in a way switched to the other side of the mirror, from the human world to the world of Dionysus. The same effect is obtained in a different way in a scene from a *symposion*

decorating a red figure *hydria* (Figure 12.3); the scene shows two drinkers lying on the ground around a *krater*. On this *krater* is clearly visible the image of a satyr in silhouette; thus from one vessel to another, the universe of reference has changed. On the *hydria*, the image refers to men; on the *krater* it refers to the world of Dionysus. The image on the bottom of the vessel-on-the-vessel relays the transition from one world to another.

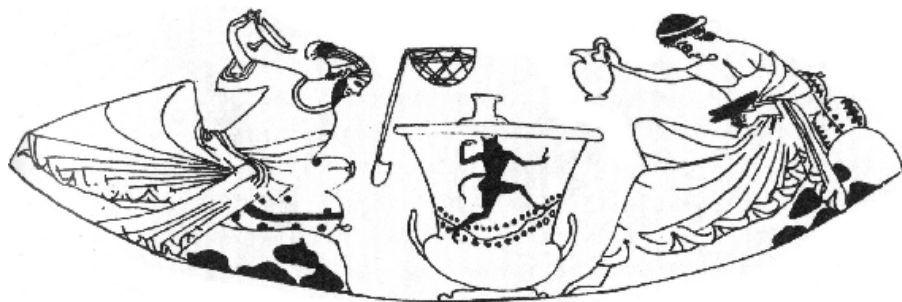


Figure 12.3 Attic red-figure hydria, not attributed. Kassel, Dierichs. c. 500 BC. Drawing © F. Lissarrague.

Each vessel can be visually perceived as an image-machine that leads the drinker from one story to another, from one space to another, and allows all sorts of imaginary journeys, between the aestheticization of social practices (the *symposion*, the *palaestra*, warfare) and the reference to mythical stories, also conveyed by poetry. We can consider that the images on vases function as a game of association, a network of connections, expected or unexpected, which find their equivalent in the poetry of the banquet and the way poets combined themes and stories in their songs.

There has been considerable debate in the attempt to clarify the status of the characters represented. This sociological analysis, important for historians, has little relevance to the painters or their clients, who know who they are and to what group they belonged. The criteria that one is given to decide the status of women present at the banquet are sometimes questionable; nudity does not automatically imply the role of a prostitute, nor clothing that of the wife. There are remarkable differences between the oldest images, on Corinthian *kraters*, and the most recent, on Attic red-figure cups. While the women of Corinth are sometimes shown reclining side by side with the banqueters, and seem to have a status almost equal to that of their couch-mates, the Attic cups are more clearly in the service of men, whether they play music, serve drinks, or take care of those who have drunk too much.

We also notice a change in the place accorded to weapons. On the Corinthian *kraters*, weapons are often shown hanging within the image, emphasizing the warrior status of the drinkers, citizens capable of bearing arms. This element disappears from black-figure pottery, and is not found again in Attic production until the middle of the fifth century, in the workshop of the

Penthesilea painter in particular. But note that the shields are hanging still in their covers, as if they were present but unused, and as if peace were thus evoked. The value accorded to arms thus takes on a different meaning, as in the epic scenes that show Achilles dining alone with Hector's corpse sprawled beneath his bed. The weapons deployed around the best of the Achaeans recall the death of Patroclus and the way he was stripped by Hector, who was in turn killed and despoiled by Achilles. In this series arms indicate both the death of Patroclus and Achilles' revenge. The latter often holds a knife in his hand and a piece of meat, echoing the blood that is seen on the body of Hector and emphasizing the almost cannibalistic violence of Achilles. In each of the three cases just mentioned, the meaning of the presence of weapons at the banquet is not quite the same, confirming that a purely lexical analysis of the image is not enough: each element of an image takes on meaning in relation to the whole in which it appears.

Votive and Funerary Reliefs

Beside the banquet vessels, there is another series of representations of the *symposion*, found on reliefs. This type of image appears in the late fifth century BC and grows steadily during the Hellenistic period. It belongs to a very different type of iconography. Reliefs were fixed objects, immobile, installed in a certain space, and permanently enshrined. Unlike vessels, they are not manipulated by their viewers, but create a fixed point of view, in a place that determines their presence and significance. Some of these reliefs are clearly funerary and bear the name of the deceased thus commemorated; this localization influenced early interpretations of the reliefs, often referred to generically as "Totenmahl" (funerary banquet). But some of these reliefs are votives, and make a kind of god of the banqueter, to whom a sacrifice is offered (Dentzer, 1982, Figs 492, 493, 497, etc.). In both cases, the iconographic scheme is relatively stable; a good example can be found on a relief in the National Museum of Athens (1501, [Figure 12.4](#)). In the center of the scene, lying on a *klinê*, a bearded man holds a *phiale*; at the foot of the bed, a seated woman raises her hands and holds up a crown (which was painted on and is no longer visible, like the food on the table in front of the bed). Under the bed, a dog gnaws a bone. On the left, behind the woman, a young servant, naked, stands near a *krater* ready to serve the drink. On the other side, to the right, a bearded man is motionless, his arms covered by his garment. The scene thus contains only one banqueter, emphasized by the composition, and toward whom all other characters are facing. This relief, published in 1839, has often been interpreted, anecdotally, as "the death of Socrates," which is clearly inaccurate, as other reliefs of this typology make clear. In fact it is concerned with paying tribute to a deceased person, presented in a family situation; the wife sits at the foot of the bed, the parents (the bearded man) greet him. Sometimes a sacrifice in his honor is shown, and

from the fourth century, the departed is depicted as a hero. Hence the temptation to read this corpus of images as related to a banquet in the afterlife; but, as Dentzer has shown (1982) in the course of his history of this motif, the banquet is linked above all to a royal ideology, and then to an aristocratic one, which diffused into the Archaic Greek world. These reliefs express a ceremonial that is neither a projection of life in the hereafter nor a depiction of the past, but a mark of status. The personage so honored is shown in an idealized situation of tranquil happiness. The image, enshrined in the sanctuary, isolates the banqueter and integrates the representation of worshippers, spectators come to greet him, into the image. It does not attempt to depict the shared conviviality as it appears on the vessels, but to make an isolated protagonist, surrounded by those who idolize him.

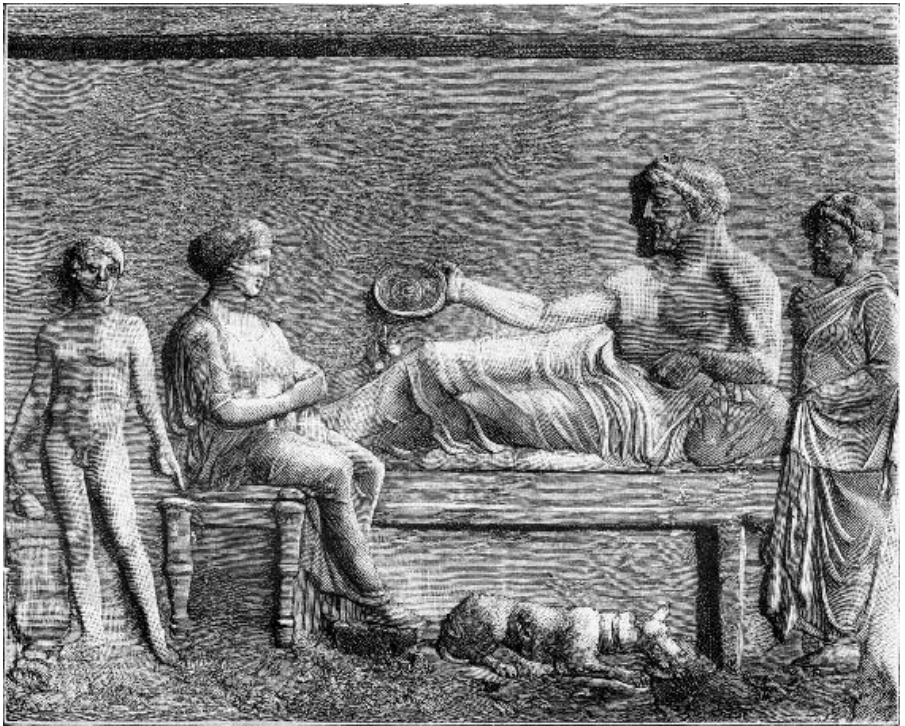


Figure 12.4 Attic votive relief. Athens. National Museum 1501. c. end of fifth century BC. V. Duruy, *Histoire des Grecs*, vol. 4, p. 688 (1874).

Roman Images

The culture of the banquet also gave rise to diverse types of representation in the Roman world, particularly in the space of the *triclinium*, the hall for social banquets. Thus in Pompeian homes frescoes are found depicting banqueters; for example, in the house known as the House of the *Triclinium* (V 2.4) three

frescoes represent, respectively, a banquet in an interior space, another in an open area, and a third under a portico (Dunbabin, 2004, Figs 28, 29). In the House of Chaste Lovers (IX 12.6) the west wall of the *triclinium* shows two couples on beds placed at right angles (Dunbabin, 2004, pl. I). As Dunbabin has shown, these paintings derive from Hellenistic models, and offered Roman drinkers idealized models, sometimes far removed from actual practices.

The mosaics that adorn the floors are often connected either with Dionysian or more directly sympotic motifs. At Saint Romain en Gal, a huge vine forms a vast floor carpet decorating a large vestibule. In the center the Lycurgus myth appears: we see the Thracian king, driven mad by Dionysus, cutting with an axe the vine that chokes him, while at the edge of the carpet mosaic Bacchus and his companions recline in the process of feasting (Leyge, 1996, 90–1).

A notable theme in this mosaic repertoire is that of *xenia* (Balmelle *et al.*, 1990), which consists in covering the floor with *trompe l'oeil* images – fruit, rubbish fallen from the guests' table – creating the illusion of an unswept floor. This simultaneously points to the abundance of provision and the delight of the illusion.

An iconography of banqueting also developed in the funeral context, depicting meals, taken not with the dead, but in their honor. Thus the catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus in Rome contains 17 representations of banquets. In one of them (Dunbabin, 2004, Fig. 104), occupying the lunette of an *arcosolium*, we see a couch in the shape of a sigma with four men lying on it. One of them calls out a woman who stands by a tripod heating wine, exclaiming “*Sabina misce*,” “Sabina, mix (the wine).” Such scenes, in the Christian context, mark both the continuity of iconographic patterns that valorize convivial practices, and the transformation of a theme of very long duration, where the reflectivity of the image is always concerned to express the happiness of the drinker and enhance his status.

FURTHER READING

P. Jacobsthal (1912) wrote an important appendix on the subject of the development of the iconography of the banquet in a study of the vases in Göttingen, and first placed it in an historical context. B. Fehr (1971) made the first complete catalogue (at the time of writing) of banquet-scenes in Greek ceramics, which has allowed discussion to expand beyond the simple level of *realia*. J.-M. Dentzer (1982), studying reliefs, and P. Schmitt Pantel (1992, new edn 2011), utilizing imagery to discuss the convivial practices of the Archaic period, have both contributed to this expansion. Several essays have been devoted to the imagery of the *symposion*, notably the work of F. Lissarrague (1987a, 1990 in English) and recently M.L. Catoni (2010), with a broader historical perspective. The catalogue of the Munich exposition *Kunst*

der Schale, Kultur des Trinkens (Kaeser, 1990) contains an excellent presentation of iconographic material, treated from the point of view of ceramics and iconography. The essential reference work is certainly the proceedings of the colloquium organized at Oxford by O. Murray and published by him in 1990 under the title *Sympotica. A Symposium on the Symposion*. In the following year (1991) W. Slater edited, in the same interdisciplinary spirit, *Dining in a Classical Context*. Several years later O. Murray expanded the scope of inquiry to take in diverse Mediterranean cultures in the colloquium *In Vino Veritas* (Murray & Tecuşan, 1995). This research has been summed up in chapter four of *ThesCRA* (Bruit Zaidman *et al.*, 2004), which also has a section treating the Roman documentation. In this last field, the work of K. Dunbabin (2003) is essential.

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

PART 2
Production and Transport

CHAPTER 13

Animals, Meat, and Alimentary By-products: Patterns of Production and Consumption¹

Christophe Chandezon

This chapter deals only with the period between the eighth century BC and the fourth century AD. These 12 centuries are framed by excellent documentation, full of instruction on meat and its symbolic, as well as commercial, value: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* mark the beginning, while the *Edict of Diocletian* (301 AD), with its fourth chapter on meat, is the final high point in our documentation, before it changes its nature. Only the case of what is known as the Greco-Roman world will be considered here.

Meat, and the interesting problems it raises, is by far the primary concern here. However, this chapter also takes into account other food products obtainable from animals, such as eggs, and milk and its derivatives. All of these belong to what the Greeks called *opson*, which complemented the *sitos*, the grain part of the diet.

Historiography has emphasized certain approaches to meat in ancient times at the expense of a necessary diversity of viewpoints. It is clear that historians of the Greek world considered meat in terms of ritual. Two things can seemingly be established with precision: (a) meat played only a minor role in the diet of the Greeks; (b) the meat consumed came from sacrifices (and incidentally from hunting). Although historians of the Roman world have not been as sensitive to this perspective, at least until recently (but see Scheid (2007b), which shows a recent trend toward emphasizing the link between meat and sacrifice in Rome), the fact remains that the history of meat-eating in ancient times has often been written as a chapter of religious history. It is thus necessary to grant it some autonomy and to forget about sacrifice to some extent (as proposed by Corbier, 1996, 218–19; see also Dalby, 2003b, 213–4). We must also recover the historical dimension: not everything concerning the consumption of meat remained the same from the time of the Homeric poems to the consumers concerned in the *Edict of Diocletian*. Tastes changed and the role of meat too. Similarly, we must distinguish geographic nuances. Meat did not have the same place in the *diaita* of an Athenian citizen of the fifth century BC and that of an inhabitant of the Roman *limes* under the Empire. Moreover, social nuances should be added, such as the differences in consumption between rich and poor.

A word on sources: it is needless to repeat the catalogue of texts dealing with

meat. All are well known, beginning with Athenaeus. It should be noted however that some information-rich texts have not yet been explored in a sufficiently systematic manner, such as the late medical literature and the *Oneirokritika* of Artemidorus. Inscriptions mention meat more rarely, but they should not be neglected; we have already cited the *Edict of Diocletian*. Iconography contributes quite a bit of information, from depictions of the cooking of sacrificial meat to steles representing butchers from the Roman Empire (Zimmer, 1982, 17–20, 93–106). Major advances in our knowledge are now arising from archeozoology, which is extending its field of study more and more to the Eastern Mediterranean (Leguilloux, 2000; Kotjabopoulou, 2003).

Livestock and Meat Production

Meat production could only develop on the margins of a farming model where meat was not the primary goal, even taking into account variations in household arrangements.

The horse was not raised for meat, and *hippophagy* was regarded with some distaste by the Greeks and Romans (Georgoudi, 2005), although it was practiced marginally: Hippocrates considers, from the physician's perspective, the value of horse and donkey meat (Hp. *Vict.* 2.46.3). However, in general, as Porphyry indicates, man could not eat animals that were his true companions in life (Porph. *Abst.* 1.14.3). As such, consumption of dog meat, while it certainly happened (Reese, 1987, 259, 263; Dalby, 1996, 61; Dalby, 2003b, 120), remained uncommon. The issue is more complicated for cattle.

Certainly, the ancients never had separate breeds for meat or milk. Breeders looked primarily for strong animals to pull ploughs, or carts, for example on construction sites (Raepsaet, 2002, 40–4). In addition, a kind of taboo forbade the killing of oxen, at least originally (Durand, 1986, 175–87), still echoed by Plutarch in the early second century AD (Plu. *Cat. Mai.* 5.5–7). However, from the Hellenistic period, the texts show that this prohibition was no longer systematically observed: the sale of culled working cattle for slaughter was too obvious a means of drawing a final profit for owners to have abstained from it. Cato (*Agr.* 3.7) speaks of it in a natural way. Victims for the great public sacrifices were always needed. In this case, the cows, bulls, and steers destined to die before the altar should be the finest possible, as stated repeatedly in the Greek sacred laws. This meant not only that the animal should not be mutilated or malformed, but that it should be of large size and very fat. It sometimes happened that shrines organized competitions of a sort between communities responsible for providing these victims in order to select the animals. Jason of Pherae thus had the cities of Thessaly competing for the Pythia of 370 BC (Xen. *HG* 6.4.29). The inscription of Bargylia (Caria, 120s AD) offers another example, where the city set wealthy individuals in competition with each other to raise cows destined for Artemis

Kindyas. An examination (*dokimasis*) of victims was organized among the tribes of the city to designate the most beautiful animals and determine their place in the procession on that basis (*SEG* 45 [1995] 1508).

The rearing of ovicaprines was linked somewhat more closely to food concerns. Sheep were not, however, reared mainly for their flesh, and goats even less so; wool and milk were of primary import. To improve the wool and to select certain characteristics, regional breeds of sheep were crossed with other types (Columella *RR* 7.2.4–5). When a large-scale system of transhumance was introduced (as was the case in central and southern Italy at the end of the Republic and under the Early Empire; Corbier, 1991), it was to supply textile centers, not to produce meat. In fact, ovicaprines played an alimentary role because their milk allowed the production of cheese, milk as such being little used as a drink (see below). Some areas specialized in breeding to produce cheese, such as the Cyclades or the south of Gaul (around Nîmes and Toulouse, for example). Sheep and goats could also provide meat, notably because they were often used in sacrifices. But here again, the sheep would often come from culls, at the end of wool or milk exploitation. Columella even advises butchering sick goats and salting their meat for later consumption (Col. *RR* 7.7.2).

The supposed scarcity of meat in the ordinary diet of the ancients has sometimes been explained as a result of their methods of stock-rearing. As most land was reserved for grain production, there was little room for livestock. This view must be qualified, because agro-pastoral integration was often taken further than has been stated (Hodkinson, 1988; Horden & Purcell, 2000, 198). Even in highly agricultural areas, as in some islands of the Cyclades, ways were found to exploit the smallest plots, and to insert cattle in niches of the grain cycle, such as grazing them on stubble after the harvest. This debate on the place of herds is relevant for the history of food, since it contradicts the image of a systemic deadlock favoring cereals and excluding livestock. The very likely hypothesis of agro-pastoral integration should lead us to raise the question of its consequences for food: should we reconsider the image of Greeks and Romans as eating almost exclusively cereal porridges, *maza* for the Greeks, *puls* for the Romans?

If neither cattle nor ovicaprine animals were primarily raised for meat, the Greco-Roman world nevertheless had an animal dedicated to meat production: this was the pig, which was basically only used as a source of food. The Greek and Latin texts agree in saying this (for example, Artem. 1.70: “But pork is the most auspicious for everyone, and with reason. For while the pig is alive, it is of no use whatsoever to man. But once it is dead, it is more savory than the other animals who are, in turn, more useful while they are alive than when they are dead,” trans. R.J. White). Because meat was a food for special occasions, the pig was associated with the idea of the festival (Var. *R.* 2.4.10). Pig-rearing took various forms. Low-income families, even

in town, could raise a pig, or better still a sow, which allowed the sale of piglets. The animal then lived almost in the company of men, and was left to forage for its food (Herod. 8.6–7). There were also genuine pig-farming operations; the herds of the king of Ithaca entrusted to Eumaeus are an early example (Hom. *Od.* 14 *passim*). Certain regions developed this type of farming, such as Arcadia in Greece and Cisalpine Gaul (Plb. 2.15.3). In this case, pig farming was carried out with large herds of semi-wild animals, which a swineherd guarded and called using a trumpet (Plb. 12.4.5–14, who compares what he saw in Italy with how it was done in his homeland of Arcadia). Forested areas were best suited to this form of extensive raising of pigs, which fed, for example, on acorns.

The other type of animal rearing specifically intended for human consumption took place in the poultry-yard. The Homeric world, like early Rome, mentions only one form of fowl, the goose (Olson & Sens, 2000, 213). The image of Penelope caring for flocks of geese on Ithaca (Hom. *Od.* 19.536–7) is almost as famous as that of the geese of the Capitol. The goose, which provided meat and eggs, was raised in flocks that were watched over by *chênoboskoi*. The Archaic period saw the conquest of new species. *Colombidae* then appear, and probably the guinea fowl. However, the most striking new feature is the chicken. It did not immediately take first place in the poultry hierarchy. In the early days of the classical period, the Greeks seemed interested only in fighting cocks. Gradually, they discovered that the females produced eggs in quantity and provided a reserve of meat. While some centers, such as Tanagra, continued to be renowned for their fighting cocks, others, such as Delos, focused on flocks of animals for consumption (Col. *RR* 8.2.4). The evolution that made of the hen the poultry-yard bird *par excellence* was complete by the end of the Hellenistic period. A little later, Columella takes up against his predecessors by explaining that financial interest favors the chicken, while fighting cocks are a bad investment (Col. *RR* 8.2.4–5, but see already Cato *Agr.* 143.3). Raising chickens was the domain of women, from Penelope to the *vilica* of Latin agricultural treatises, perhaps because the poultry-yard was an extension of the house. Only the duck had not yet truly found its place, and remained more a game-bird than a domestic one. These changes were dramatic, and poultry took over a large part of the diet: the *De re coquinaria* devotes a whole chapter to it (Apicius 5; see Blanc & Nercessian, 1992, 123–37). This shows that it was possible to develop the production of food proteins.

The list of types of animal-rearing, to be complete, should include the case of wild animals bred in reserves to provide the table with game less reliant on the vagaries of hunting (see below).

It should be added that the model just described was subject to strong regional nuances. Fernand Braudel (1980, 159–63) once spoke of northwestern Europe as a Europe of carnivores. Part of this Europe was incorporated into the

Roman world. Tacitus' comments on the meat-eating Germans (Tac. *Ger.* 23.1), as well as archeozoological research results in Gaul, point in this direction (Ménier, 2001a), and show that this Europe of carnivores was already a reality.

Hunting

Hunting is the other way to get meat. The symbolic and social dimensions of this activity are well established (Schnapp, 1997; Barringer, 2001). But what part did it play in diet? Archeozoology can help refine the answer we give based on the texts. Literary sources from Aristophanes to Petronius show that game was part of any fine banquet of the Greco-Roman elite. In classical Athens, one had to serve at least a few thrushes or a few pieces of hare to one's guests (Ar. *Pax*, 1149–50). Under the Empire, the fashion, born in the Hellenistic period, of presenting a complete beast, a wild boar for example, to guests is evidenced both by the banquet of Trimalchio and the polite society frequented by Plutarch. (Petr. *Sat.* 40–1; Plu. *Mor.* 658 A) The symbolic prestige of the hunt was thus carried over into the banqueting rooms. The act of the servant carving a whole boar in the guests' presence somehow echoed the act of the hunter who killed the beast with spear in hand. However, while ancient discourse seems to focus heavily on game, archeozoology reduces this phenomenon to more modest proportions. In habitation sites, game plays a very minor role: in Nea Halos, in southern Thessaly, wild animals represent only 4% of the bones found in excavations dated to the third century BC (Prummel, 2003). Even in shrines dedicated to Artemis, where one might expect a greater presence of deer, their meat is scarcely present in the local bone material. In one shrine of Artemis Elaphebolos at Hyampolis in Phocis, for example, deer account for only 6% of mammal bones found on site for periods ranging from the Archaic to the Roman Empire (Stanzel, 1991, 87–119). Thus, in reality, game made up a very small part of the meat intake in the diet of the Greeks and Romans.

But what game? One way to classify wild meat is to oppose big game (deer, roe deer, fallow deer, and wild boar for the most part) and small game (hares and birds of all kinds). Here again, the symbolic dimension determines the classification. Some game animals are noble to hunt and eat, others less so. The boar dominates the noble game: it was a fine thing to confront him in the open fields, or at least in the banquet hall. The boar is an animal that defends itself against the hunter, which allowed the hunter to demonstrate his *arêtê*, his *virtus*. It was the king of game even in the palace of Alexandria; under Cleopatra, the cooks were constrained always to have eight boars ready to cook, even when the number of guests was very low, because it was necessary to have one to hand whenever Antony manifested the desire to eat (Plu. *Ant.* 28.3–6). The deer, on the other hand, flees the hunter, and was associated with fear. It was not until the Middle Ages that its image changed. A hierarchy also

applied to small game: the hare was a sought-after animal, as was the thrush among birds. Here again we find no differences between Greece and Rome. We may add that the Greeks and Romans hunted many different wild animals, and that there are remains showing that all the animals hunted could be eaten. Bear was eaten occasionally (though its meat had a very low reputation, Plu. *Mor* 917D), and even the fox in some regions (Gal. *Al. Fac.* 3.1; 6.665 K). All sorts of small birds were also hunted for consumption, including blackbirds and even nightingales (Dalby, 1996, 63–5). The *Edict of Diocletian* certifies the frequency of consumption of wild birds, and this dietary practice continued in the Mediterranean region until very recently.

The frequent catching of small animals might suggest that they could provide a dietary supplement for the rural common classes of antiquity. There is likely something in this. The agora of Athens already had a market for small birds (Wycheley, 1957, 197); some were alive and served as pets, such as quail and songbirds, but most were dead and intended for alimentary consumption. They were often sold in batches of ten, and this was still the custom in 301 AD, as mentioned in the *Edict of Diocletian* (4.34–42). These little birds were not all prestigious foods, and it is therefore likely that those who hunted them did so more for extra income than for food.

The existence of a market for game raised the problem of regularity of supply: consumers would have desired to buy wild meat without depending on the vagaries of hunting. On the other hand, wild game had the drawback of being lean, contrary to consumer preferences for rather fatty meats. Meat from the hunt was less appreciated than that of livestock (in App. *Hisp.* 54, the army of Lucullus, in Spain, does not eat wild game except when it has no choice, and it makes the soldiers sick). These two problems probably encouraged the breeding of wild animals. This process began with the *paradeisoi* of the classical period, which were hunting reserves, and led to the *leporaria* of Roman villas (Var. *R* 3.3.12; 3.13.1; Col. *RR* 9.1.1) and to systems of fattening animals that were normally considered game. The *Edict of Diocletian*, significantly, sets higher prices, for example for geese and pheasants, for domestically reared and fat specimens than for wild individuals (4.18–22).

Conservation and Commerce

The slaughter of animals was organized to allow for the transport of animals on the hoof. The model of sacrificial slaughter was probably decisive: the victims' deaths took place near (and even in the presence of) the consumers. Pigs, for example, were led alive to be slaughtered near to their place of consumption. Plutarch describes a street near the agora in Athens blocked by a herd of many pigs, impeding pedestrians. These animals were certainly there to be sold live or slaughtered by butchers (Plu. *Mor.* 580e–f). Geese were also

brought on foot from northern Gaul to Rome (Plin. *Nat.* 10.53). In practice, we do not know if the killing was done right next to the butchers and meat markets (this seems to have been the case in Pompeii) or on the urban outskirts (Frayn, 1995, 109).

The consumption of meat (and even of eggs and cheese) is affected by the problem of food storage. We must therefore distinguish fresh products and products that have been subjected to preservation processes. For cheese, things are fairly simple: if it is not eaten fresh, the cheese ages, becoming hard. It can then be grated. The cheese grater, in Greek lands, is part of the standard equipment of kitchens, and grated cheese served as a condiment, as Parmesan cheese is used nowadays. For eggs, the agricultural treatises also indicate processes for preservation in the long term (Col. *RR* 8.6). Things are more difficult for meat. If it is not consumed fresh (and sometimes too fresh, when eaten right after a sacrifice), meat is difficult to keep. Certainly, one could hang joints of meat in a cool place, a *carnarium*, but this had its limitations (Apul. *Met.* 8.31). The methods most used were based on salting (referred to as *tarichos* in Greek, a word which does not apply only to salted fish), or drying could be accompanied by smoking (D. Chr. *Or* 7.44; Col. *RR* 12.55 gives several recipes for salt pork; Apicius 1.7 [André] suggests other methods, e.g. with honey). Commerce could then be carried out over long distances. In this way Gaulish hams arrived in the markets of Rome, where they were very popular (Var. *R* 2.4.10).

Today, meat is sold by the butcher. This is a figure who does not seem to have always existed. In Greece, the particulars of this profession do not appear until the mid-fifth century BC (Berthiaume, 1982, 12–14). In Greek, the butcher is called *mageiros* or *kreopôlês* (Berthiaume, 1982, 44–70), in Latin, *macellarius* and *lanius* (Frayn, 1995). The *mageiros* not only carried out sacrifices, but was a butcher selling fresh meat (and occasionally also a cook). He practiced his profession in the market, the tools of his trade a knife (Ar. *Pax.* 1017–8), a table on which he carved the pieces, and scales, as the meat was sold by weight (Ath. 580c). In the Latin part of the Mediterranean, things were almost identical and only the terminology changes. Described in this way, the butcher seems to retain nothing of his sacred function. This is however not completely true: he sold – or rather resold – meat from sacrificial victims. We know of the problem of the Corinthian Christians who feared that, buying their meat from the butcher, they would consume the flesh of victims of pagan sacrifices (Paul I *Cor.* 8–10). It is also possible that the animals slaughtered for meat had been subject to prior ritual procedures (Berthiaume, 1982, 62–70). Butchers seem to have been usual figures of trade in a Greco-Roman city. The agora of Athens had an area where meat was sold (Wycheley, 1957, 196–7) and the Roman *macella* gathered many butchers, set up one next to the other (De Ruyt, 1983, 345–7). Consumers could also purchase pieces of cooked meat, possibly accompanied by a sauce meant to

imitate those favored by upper class gourmets. This is what the *popinae* and *tabernae* of Roman cities sold (the Greek texts of that time speak of *kapêloi*; Corbier, 1996, 230–1). Prepared pork meats were also available, cooked, or to be cooked by the consumer, in the form of assorted sausages or meatballs (*ofellae* in Latin).

When did the development of this trade in meat, intended to meet consumer demand, take place? In other words, when did the consumption of meat begin to adopt a certain autonomy from the sacrifice and the banquet? One naturally thinks of the *allantopôlês* of Aristophanes (*Eq.* 143 *et passim*). The butcher, with his balance, also appears in the *Characters* of Theophrastus (*Char.* 9.4; see also *Pl. Leg.* 849d). From the fourth century BC, the city-dweller in Athens could buy meat either for cooking or ready-cooked. The butcher appears at about the same time as the baker. We should see this as an aspect of the food revolution affecting Greece in classical times, and which is evident in the fourth century, a trend that later accelerated. If the channels of exchange for meat included sacrifice, public distribution (Corbier, 1989, 118–22), and gifts between individuals (as in the case of game given by the hunter: *Apul. Met.* 8.31), the growth of the meat trade was nonetheless a revolution. It took place in the city, taking its beginnings from the elites, and it seems to have soon enough affected large segments of the population.

Good Cuts and Good Cooking

It has often been explained that these butchers were also still dependent on the sacrificial model in their custom of selling meat by weight, without differentiating between better and worse cuts (Berthiaume, 1982, 50–1, 63–4), whence arose the demands of some buyers trying to ensure that, for the same price, their butcher served them the best pieces. Such a reproduction of the equal-distribution model of shares of victims is possible early in the history of ancient butchery, but it seems hard to believe that it lasted very long. The texts in fact allow us clearly to perceive a gustatory hierarchy of meat and cuts in place from the fourth century in Athens.

At the summit pork reigned. The ancients agree that this was the best and healthiest of meats (*Hp. Reg.* 2.46.2; *Artem.* 1.70). Pork tops the meat section in the *Edict of Diocletian* (4.1) and its price is higher than all others (12 *denarii* a pound, compared with 8 *denarii* for beef, goat, or lamb). Moreover, as noted by Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 8.209) its meat offered a variety of flavors. In antiquity the ham was second only to the vulva and womb of the sow. The pig also allowed for the production of prepared meat products, for which we can with difficulty find corresponding forms: sausages, puddings, meatballs, etc.

The taste for red meat from beef was unknown to the Greeks and Romans. Modern butchers' shops would surprise them greatly on this point. In *Apicius*,

there are only five recipes involving beef or veal. This is partly due to the absence of animals raised for slaughter for meat. Lamb was also a foreign dish to the tastes of that time. The flesh of sheep and goat were little appreciated and always cooked for a long time in sauce. The stew and casserole were the only natural ways to eat them. The hierarchy of meat was more open for poultry and game, and matters became more complex in this area, as consumers, from the Hellenistic period, turned to fattened poultry and prestigious game such as the hare or thrush.

However, one must go beyond a simple ranking of species to note certain manifestations of taste in food that differed from ours, sometimes sharply. The Greeks and Romans loved fatty meats, for example (Corbier, 1989, 129–32). This was already the case in the Homeric world (Hom. *Il.* 9.206–9; *Od.* 14.81). As time passed, methods for fattening animals were perfected. From the Hellenistic period, the consumption of *foie gras* is attested (André, 1981, 127–8) and quickly reached Rome (Plin. *Nat.* 10.52). This led the Romans to complex methods for fattening capons and even dormice (*glires*, fattened in the *gliraria*). Another trend we are more familiar with was a preference for young animals (*galathêna* in Greek): the lamb and the kid were in high demand, as well as suckling pigs (Dalby, 1996, 60). This is quite understandable if one remembers that, except for pork and poultry, animals were not raised for meat in antiquity. The consequence was that the cull animals that were eaten often had very tough meat, requiring long cooking. So it was a luxury to be able to afford the meat of young animals.

Under these conditions, cooking methods played an important role, and the oppositions between cooked and raw, roasted and boiled, are familiar. Discussions on this issue were stimulated by the influence of anthropology on ancient history. The opposition of raw and cooked is easy to discuss: we need only to remember how raw meat is characteristic of barbarism throughout Greco-Roman thought. The Huns, naturally, were a people who could only eat their meat raw (Amm. Marc. 31.2-3). As for the roasted and boiled, things are more complex. It is true that the Greeks, like the Latins, opposed cooking directly over the flame (Greek *optos*, Latin *assus*) to cooking in a liquid (Greek *hepsomenos*, Latin *elixus*). In Greece, boiling was considered superior to roasting to the extent that it was a further step away from raw meat (Detienne, 1977a, 177–81). It also represented an advance in the history of mankind, which is why roasting was considered more ancient than boiling (Var. *L* 5.109). However, in fact this opposition is only partly significant. Both cooking methods – which also involved two types of utensil, the spit and the pot – were considered acceptable, even if boiling prevailed by far. Roasting meat rarely occurred, and when it did, it was almost always after having first boiled the pieces. Boiling was thus the main route explored by Greco-Roman cuisine, which resulted in a more elaborate and more complex form of boiling, simmering, which allowed the cook to enhance the fats of

meats and obtain very rich sauces. This penchant for cooking meat slowly over a low heat also elicited the greatest condemnation from philosophers and moralists, and it was simmered foods and sauces that they would have liked to banish from the city as a source of moral corruption.

These sauces almost always accompanied meat, and that is why the Greek *mageiros* means not only the one who made the sacrifice and butchered the meat, but also the cook, able to produce dishes *en sauce* and well-seasoned preparations (Berthiaume, 1982, 71–8). These sauces could be cooked at the same time as the meat or separately. In classical Greece, for example, one poured *katachysmata*, liquid sauces made with condiments such as grated cheese, oil, and honey, on some types of meat (Ar. *Ec.* 1171–2, for thrushes). The hare could be prepared in its own blood, to make the *mirmakus*, an equivalent of the jugged hare (Archestr. fr. 57: Olson & Sens, 2000, with commentary p. 207–12). In the *De re coquinaria*, the instructions for preparing meat are often no more than an endless repertoire of sauces, sometimes very elaborate, based on spices, condiments, oil, vinegar, and often *garum* (Solomon, 1995).

At banquets, the presentation of the meat was also given more and more attention. The Hellenistic period inaugurated the practice of presenting whole animals. Its most spectacular form was the presentation in the Trojan manner: this consisted in stuffing the beast with smaller animals, such as a boar with thrushes. The best example of this practice is the boar served *à la troyenne* by Trimalchio, where the thrushes, exceptionally, are still alive, and soar through the banquet hall when the boar is carved. It then remains to bring in a bird-catcher, who captures the birds alive in the presence of the guests (Petron. *Sat.* 40–1). Here the cooked and the living mingle, and the most prestigious animal of the hunt – the wild boar – and the bird most sought after by bird-catchers – the thrush – are brought together. In the same vein, the cook could give the animal the appearance it had had in life: the peacock was served up with its feathers, which is probably why the *Edict of Diocletian* reckons the price of a male at 300 *denarii*, while a female costs only 200 (4.39–40). Meat cuisine was thus a cuisine of pageantry. It was a cuisine of disguise as well, which allowed the taste of one meat to be given to another, to pass off meat as fish. Finally, it was a cuisine that was always in danger of sinking into wastefulness and the display of luxury, and therefore a cuisine condemned by the moralists from its inception (Corbier, 1989, 139–40; Davidson, 1995, 1997).

Among the other foods derived from animals, cheese does not seem to have enjoyed any special prestige, despite its place in the diet. It had a strange relationship with meat, being seen as a substitute for it (Plu. *Mor.* 234 E; Auberger, 2000). Milk was a beverage characteristic of barbarians (Auberger, 2001) and, in the Greco-Roman world, thought unnatural except in the diets of infants and of the unwell (Artem. 1.16). This was not the case with eggs

(Dalby, 2003b, 126–7), which were served in egg cups and eaten with a spoon: they had been part of banquets since classical times, and Apicius discusses them in the book devoted to prestige foods (Apicius 7.19 [André]). The eggs of ducks and peacocks were the most sought after, even more than those of hens (Blanc & Nercessian, 1992, 135–7). Eggs were also used in culinary preparations, such as the Roman *patinae*, but it is noteworthy that they appear to have played no role in baking.

Consumers

It would be very difficult – perhaps impossible – to prove that the average consumer at the same level in the social scale ate more meat in the second century AD than at the end of the Archaic period. Attempts have been made to estimate the amount of meat distributed at the end of Athenian sacrifices of the classical period: Jameson proposed 2 kg per year (1988, 105–6), which is little. Even by adding to this the small pieces of meat that the ordinary Athenian could buy at any time, we must continue to think that he generally ate little meat. This is not surprising: it must have been so for a long time in Europe.

However, from the beginning of the Archaic period to the Roman Empire, a slow growth in the share of meat in the diet is very likely. This would be a phenomenon foreshadowed by the spread of wheat in place of barley, the dissemination of a model of elite consumption. Meat was an element of social distinction in the realm of food sometimes attained to by less affluent levels of society. Its part in the diet of the urban working classes, which eventually perhaps become significant, is reflected in an agoranomic inscription from the Piraeus (first century BC; Steinhauer, 1994; Bresson, 2000, 151–82). This shows that it was possible to buy cheap cuts of tripe for a few copper coins. Such sums remained, at the cost of some effort, within the reach of humble consumers. Similarly, customers of the *popinae* and *tabernae* of the Roman world also came to eat meat. This development resulted, in 270 AD, in the emperor Aurelian adding distributions of pork to the people's grain distribution (*SHA* 35.2, 48.1).

Some members of the social fabric at large, because of their professional status, were greater meat eaters. Such was the case of athletes. If the Greeks retained a memory of a former era where athletes had a purely vegetable diet, they could also harken back to the beginning of the classical period, the time of their conversion to a meat diet (Paus. 6.7.10, who assigns this change to a runner called Dromeus of Stymphalus; Plin. *Nat.* 23.121 deems it a novelty introduced by a coach named Pythagoras; see Jüthner, 1965, 85–6). The figure of the meat-gorging athlete thus became a stereotype. A boxer of the fifth century BC, Theogenes of Thasos, was reputed to have eaten a whole bullock (in this case, it is a question of Maeonian beef, so actually a bison). The same

feat was attributed to Milo of Croton (Ath. 412d–f). Heracles served as a prototype of the athlete as great meat eater: it is with his example that Athenaeus begins his discussion of *opsophagia*, before moving on to athletes. By imitation, other competitive professionals, especially trumpeters, would be assigned the same voracity for meat (Ath. 414e–415a, see also meat in the diet of *choreutes*, Plu. *Mor.* 349A; see Larmour, 1999, 54).

Soldiers were also known as meat eaters. It possibly explains a phenomenon that greatly intrigued the ancients, the absence of fish and the importance of roasted meat in the diet of Homeric heroes (Pl. *R* 404b–c is surprised, as is Plu. *Mor.* 730C; on meat in the Homeric diet see Bruns, 1970, 46–50). Certainly, the ideal of the warrior was sometimes thought of as almost vegetarian: the Spartans were supposed to have eaten meat only occasionally (Plu. *Lyc.* 12) and Plato pretended to forget the *opson* in his city (Pl. *R* 372c–e), which he would like to be a city of pure *sitophagoi*. However, this was not the norm; quite the contrary, as clearly seen in the Roman army. At the siege of Numantia in 134 BC, the arrangements made by Scipio to limit the luxury of meat preparations (App. *Hisp.* 85) already reflect their normality in the diet of troops (Corbier, 1989, 116–18, 141; Davies, 1989, 190–6). Subsequently, other measures for disciplining troops moved in the same direction: not to oppose the soldiers' meat diet, which was a given, but to limit the sophistication of the methods of preparation, perceived as a weakening influence on the ardor of the fighting soldier. In this context, the pig appears as a typical food for troops. The place of this meat in the diet of the Roman garrisons of the empire is confirmed in Egypt by the *ostraka* of Mons Claudianus, and on the British *limes* by the Vindolanda tablets. We see from these documents that pigs were raised around the camp of Mons Claudianus (Bingen *et al.*, 1997, 102–3), while the supply services regularly purchased hams (*pernae*), piglets, eggs, chickens, geese, and even a little game at Vindolanda (Bowman, 1994, 68–71).

Conclusion

In describing the role of animal foods in the Greco-Roman world, it is tempting to contrast two models: one would be that of classical Athens, known mainly from the comic poets, and the other that of imperial Rome, based on the texts of Pliny, Petronius, and the *De re coquinaria*. There are continuities between the two, but also oppositions, which can be fairly used to reveal very different political, social, and even economic situations. This line of reasoning is only partly right, and forgets that eating habits have a history. To grasp the long term, we must not neglect the steps which comprise it. The turning point seems to lie in the fourth century, and to occur mainly in Athens and Sicily. It paved the way for developments that occurred in the Hellenistic world, which served as a model in Rome at the end of the Republic. For this reason, one of the necessary areas of research for the history of food in

antiquity in coming years will likely be an examination of what we know of the Hellenistic period.

It is also standard to say that the Greeks and Romans ate little meat (see, e.g., Garnsey, 1999, 16, 123). This assertion is probably true overall, but we must see beyond it. In the long millennium we are dealing with, things changed: meat became more and more common over time, and affected larger and larger groups of the population. It is likely that other animal products, like eggs, underwent a similar evolution. It should not be forgotten that meat actually had a place in what might be called the trilogy of food: it was part of the *opson*, the Roman *pulmentarium*, along with grain and wine. The other significant change relates only to meat, and is characterized by its tendency to move further and further from the context of sacrifice, which is not to say that it was desacralized, a notion that in any case had no meaning in antiquity. This trend probably began earlier than has been thought, and was not characteristically of the Roman Empire. Its first signs appear in classical Athens. It was made possible by the development of techniques of animal-rearing that did not compete with grain farming, such as raising pigs (in forests) and poultry. The fact remains that meat was nonetheless basically a luxury goods, just like exotic foods. It remained associated with festivities and good cheer to the end. It is perhaps there that we see the most enduring legacy of its original link with sacrifice.

FURTHER READING

Meat consumption can be studied through some major written sources and random information in Greco-Roman literature and inscriptions. For the eighth century BC Homeric poetry can be used, for the classical era Attic comedy, including fragments transmitted by Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. The end of the Hellenistic era and the early Roman Empire offer treatises on farm production in Latin (Cato the Elder, Varro, Columella). A similar book from late antiquity was transmitted in Greek, the *Geoponica*, and a cookbook in Latin known as *De re coquinaria* (Apicius). The *Edict of Diocletian* gives an idea of food preferences. Archeozoological records are less accessible and often difficult to analyze. However, being increasingly available, they inform on sacrificial procedures related to food consumption and should be taken into consideration in the future (Kotjabopoulou *et al.*, 2003).

Even if we can better understand meat production, some issues have been raised in recent historiography. Studies on husbandry (Hodkinson, 1988) tend to show that meat was not a big part of regular consumption, except for pork. Hunting seems to have had mainly a symbolic connotation (Barringer, 2001) and game played a minor role in the human diet. Animal origin products such as milk and dairy (the egg seems to be less popular in ancient cooking) deserve further studies (see Auberger, 2000, 2001),

Scholarship has focused mainly on the relationship between food consumption and sacrifice. The common view makes meat a rare commodity, and its production required mandatory ritual sacrifice (Jameson, 1988). For the Romans, the significance of the sacrifice was underlined only recently (Scheid, 2007b). The common view considers it a systematic ritual for the slaughtering of domestic animals. However, this does not imply that consumers had to wait for specific religious festivals to obtain meat, even if slaughtering an animal to be sold solely for consumption required the same specific ceremonial killing. This distinction is vital to understand the place of meat in the ancient diet and the development of the butchery trade. The Greek *mageiros* was first a sacrificer, but became also a meat seller and a cook (Berthiaume, 1982). We are still awaiting an extensive study of butchery in the ancient world (see Frayn, 1995; van Andringa, 2007).

We must also consider changes over time and space in the social significance of meat eating. In classical Athens, and in imperial Rome even more, meat is a common foodstuff (Davidson, 1995; Corbier, 1996). It appears too that meat was more popular in the northwest regions of the Roman Empire, as opposed to the Mediterranean Basin. Some social groups such as athletes and soldiers were big meat consumers.

The history of taste still needs to be written. Ancient accounts imply that the most popular meat cuts were not the same as in modern Europe. Fatty flesh was preferred to lean. This can be explained in part by the cooking techniques in use. The dichotomy between boiled and roasted meat has been debated by scholars, since it is a good indication of cultural representations (Detienne, 1977b, 177–81). In ancient times, meat stew was highly favored (Corbier, 1989). The variety of sauces is surprising (Solomon, 1995). Ancient authors considered this a sign of luxury. The way meat dishes were displayed was a means to show social status and it deserves further study. Ancient accounts show that fancy displays were looked for, but also how it might be a sign of bad taste for members of the elite. Sometimes, the entire cooked animal could be served, creating the illusion of a living specimen. Last, even if there were some taboos related to meat consumption and intellectual arguments against its consumption, they remained marginalized and did not have a big impact on the overall consumption of meat.

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 14

Fish

Dimitra Mylona

Introduction

Fish eating in Greece in Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman times is an extensively researched issue. From as early as the nineteenth century numerous books and articles have been produced (for a critical review of this literature see Mylona, 2008, 5–15). This research took place within very diverse intellectual environments leading to the adoption of equally diverse positions. Fishing is perceived either as an important, organized, large-scale activity (see, e.g., Rostovtzeff, 1926, 1941; Dumont, 1976/77) or as an opportunistic, emergency act, employed in times of hardship or used as a means of diversification of the subsistence base of ancient societies (see, e.g., Gallant, 1985). Fish have been viewed as a basic foodstuff, especially in their preserved form (references in Gallant, 1985, 11), as a kind of hunger food eaten in times of need (Gallant, 1985, 43–4), or alternatively as an expensive food item for the elite, which functioned as a key element in the negotiation of power and prestige in ancient Greece (see, e.g., Davidson, 1995, 1997). Almost all works, either the ones based on written sources or those inspired by economic models, disregarded the materiality of ancient fishing and fish eating, basing their analysis either on written sources and the ancient discourse around fishing or on expected behaviors and abstract ahistorical economic notions.

Recently, researchers have reconsidered the role of fish and fishing. Methodological developments in archaeology have generated a wealth of new data, mostly in the form of fish remains (see, e.g., Mylona, 2003a, 2008, Table 5.1a–f) and to a lesser extent of chemical traces of fish in pots and on the human skeleton itself (see, e.g., Barrett, Beukens, & Nicholson, 2001; Vika, Aravantinos, & Richards, 2009). Archaeology has also focused on previously neglected data, such as fishing tools and fish-related establishments (see, e.g., Bekker-Nielsen & Bernal Casasola, 2010; Higginbotham, 1997). Research has taken advantage of new ideas and theoretical schemes in archaeology, ancient history, and anthropology and has benefited from advances in oceanographic and biological knowledge about the marine environment and the Aegean in particular (for extensive discussion and related references see Mylona, 2008, 11–14, 16–23; see also Jacobsen, 2005; Morales, 2010). This new wave of research deals with fish, fishing, and fish eating in a context-specific manner, emphasizing its historicity and the diversity of human choices and ideas as far as fish issues are concerned (e.g. Purcell, 1995; Rose, 2000; Mylona, 2003b;

Wilkins, 2005a; Bekker-Nielsen, 2005b; Lytle, 2006).

This chapter aims to present some basic issues concerning the production and distribution of fish, taking advantage of these developments. It presents the current knowledge on those hydrographic, topographic, and biological features of the Greek seas that are pertinent to ancient fisheries. It also presents the fish resources that were exploited by ancient Greeks, based on literary and zooarchaeological evidence. Finally, it discusses some practical aspects of fish distribution and marketing. In presenting these issues, this chapter emphasizes the diversity and variability of fish as a resource and also the flexibility of human responses to it. It demonstrates the advantages offered to the understanding of ancient fishing and fish eating by the combined use of a wide range of diverse data.

Geographically this paper focuses on the Aegean Sea and its resources, and chronologically it covers the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. For convenience the conventional rubric “ancient Greece” is used to refer to this particular space and time.

How Rich was the Aegean Sea? Issues of Availability

To understand ancient Greek fishing and its impact on economic and cultural life, it is important to understand fish as a resource. The richness in marine life of any sea is directly related to its physical characteristics and nutrient availability. Most discussions on fishing in Greece, both ancient and modern, begin with an assumption that has become almost axiomatic. According to this, the Aegean Sea is oligotrophic, that is, very poor in nutrients, unable to sustain large fish populations, and therefore unable to support a sizable and complex fishing economy (Horden & Purcell, 2000, 190–1 and references therein; see also Gallant, 1985). Recent developments in the recording and understanding of marine morphology and ecosystems in the Greek seas however bring the above statement into question and permit a more accurate evaluation of the productivity dynamics of the Aegean and Greek waters more generally.

Due to its long-term geodynamic evolution and active tectonics, the seas around Greece display a complicated physiography in terms of sea-bed morphology and island configuration (Stanley & Perissoratis, 1977). The Aegean is characterized as a complex system regarding certain features that are directly pertinent to its fisheries profile, that is its hydrology, water mass circulation, and biological, chemical, and sedimentological processes.

In these terms, the Aegean can be divided into two broad areas. The northern Aegean, a semi-enclosed sea, is characterized by an extensive continental shelf (Astaras & Sotiriadis, 1988; Lykousis & Chronis, 1989) and by low

salinity and cool surface waters. These are the effects of the outflow of several large rivers and of the Black Sea at its northeastern part (Unluata *et al.*, 1990; Yuce, 1995; Kallianiotis, Vidoris, & Sylaios, 2004, and references therein). This is not only the most nutrient-rich area of the Aegean Sea but it can be definitely characterized as clearly eutrophic (Bousoulengas *et al.*, 1998). The southern Aegean is a more open sea. The water salinity is generally high with variations (Lykousis *et al.*, 2002) and the continental shelf is limited, with steep depth gradients (Souvermezoglou, Krasakopoulou, & Pavlidou, 1999). The southern Aegean basin is generally deeper, with certain areas, such as the Cyclades, forming a shallower plateau (Lykousis *et al.*, 2002). It is considered one of the most oligotrophic seas within the Mediterranean and in comparison to the world's oceans (Souvermezoglou, 1989; Souvermezoglou, Krasakopoulou, & Pavlidou, 1999; Lykousis *et al.*, 2002).

Recent research on Aegean water composition throughout the year for a period of several years (Lykousis *et al.*, 2002) has shown, unsurprisingly, that the more eutrophic areas within the Aegean, even in spring when productivity is lower, are concentrated in the northern Aegean, covering even broad areas of open sea. Additionally, the eastern coasts of mainland Greece, the seas around Euboea, and the Pagasetikos, the Saronic, and the Corinthian Gulfs as well as the recesses of the major Peloponnesian gulfs (Argolic, Laconian, Messenian) are also fairly eutrophic, as is indeed a broad sea band along the Asia Minor coast and the nearby islands. Interestingly almost all coasts, mainland and insular, exhibit some degree of nutrient richness very close to the shore. It is perhaps worth noting that these nutrient-rich areas correspond to areas rich in human habitation both today and in the past.

This richness is extremely high near river estuaries and in areas with coastal lagoons and wetlands (Katsadorakis & Paragamian, 2006, and references therein). These are rich feeding grounds for fish (Koutrakis, Tsikliras, & Sinis, 2005). Wetlands can be large, for example the chain of large lagoons close to the river Nestos, in northeastern Greece, or very small, such as the tiny marshes at the estuaries of seasonal ravines. Although the largest of these ecosystems are found mostly in northern and western Greece, smaller ones are scattered all over the country (Heliotis, 1988, 23, Table 3). It is characteristic that nowadays about 200 such wetlands are distributed between 35–40 islands, many of which are typical arid environments (Katsadorakis & Paragamian, 2006). Considering that since the 1920s over 60% of the Greek wetlands have dried up, one can imagine that in the past such rich coastal areas were much more common features of the Greek landscape (Heliotis, 1988; Katsadorakis & Paragamian, 2006).

Research on the composition of the ichthyofauna of the Aegean, both northern and southern, as revealed by controlled trawling catches (e.g. Tsimenides *et al.*, 1991; Tserpes *et al.*, 1999; Kallianiotis *et al.*, 2000; Kallianiotis, Vidoris, & Sylaios, 2004) have shown that here applies what characterizes the

Mediterranean fisheries in general, that is, a multi-species composition, where many commercial species appear seasonally in the catches (Kallianiotis, Vidoris, & Sylaios, 2004, and references therein). Also, it appears that certain combinations of species occur with higher frequency in zones of certain depths (Kallianiotis *et al.*, 2000), or in certain geographical areas (Kallianiotis, Vidoris, & Sylaios, 2004). Furthermore, especially in the southern Aegean, shallow waters generally exhibit the highest densities in biomass and in variety of fish species (Kallianiotis *et al.*, 2000). Coastal lagoons and estuaries, typical feeding grounds for a variety of fish, populations of migrating fish such as the eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), the sturgeon (Acipenseridae), the shad (*Alosa fallax*), and especially the mullets (Mugilidae) are very important (Koutrakis, Tsikliras, & Sinis, 2005). 447 fish species have been recorded so far, belonging to 129 families (Papakonstantinou, 1988, 29).

The preceding synopsis, brief and generalized as it is, highlights certain features of the Aegean that are directly pertinent to any evaluation of ancient fisheries. The various physical characteristics of the Greek marine environments are highly variable, even within the same region. They form, to use the term of Horden & Purcell, a “continuum of discontinuities” (2000, 53, 190–5). Large expanses of Greek seas, such as the northern Aegean, are eutrophic, even by world-seas standards. At the same time, even in generally oligotrophic parts, such as the southern Aegean, there are clearly eutrophic micro-regions. Although there is a clear variation in the productivity of different marine areas throughout Greece, some degree of richness is observed in the inshore waters of most coastal areas and around coastal wetlands. In relatively oligotrophic marine areas, which are generally coasts of steep depth gradients, the ichthyofauna is characterized by the presence of a large number of species, with slightly different habits and habitat requirements, the majority of which can be found in shallow waters. This offers a varied resource, a considerable part of which is accessible throughout the year. Besides, in these areas, even the ichthyofauna of deeper waters is accessible from near the coast, given suitable technology. Several parts of the Greek coastal lagoons and other wetlands of lesser extent form important features of the landscape sources of abundant fish.

In the study of ancient fisheries, the above points are particularly relevant. They show that in an area such as Greece, and the Aegean more specifically, generalized evaluations can be very misleading. The fishing potential of each site/region should be viewed individually, taking into account the local physiography, but also the fishing technology available to the fishermen. It appears that, from a resource point of view, what is more important is not the total available fish biomass, but the part of it that was accessible and exploitable by the fishermen in specific locations.

What Fish Resources were Exploited in the Aegean? Issues of Choice and Fishing Technology

The fish that were available in the Aegean in antiquity form the canvas against which ancient fishermen and fish consumers exercised their choices and preferences, and built upon these to create a complex system of ideas about fish and the marine world. What was actually chosen to be caught and consumed is clearly revealed by archaeology (fish bones) and to a lesser extent by written sources and artistic representations. What follows here is a synopsis of the research to date. The relevant detailed data for each geographical region in Greece have been published elsewhere (Mylona, 2008, 50–65). From the 129 fish families reported in Greek seas (Papakonstantinou, 1988), which include commercial fish but also rare or deep-water creatures and even recent colonizers, over 40 families have been identified archaeologically or encountered in literature (Table 14.1).

Table 14.1 Taxonomic presence of fish on the basis of fish remains and references in literary sources.

Habitat	Family	Taxonomy	Fish bones	Written sources
Inshore–offshore	(Elasmobranch)	indeterminate	+	+
	Alopiidae	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>		+
	Scyliorhinidae	<i>Scyliorhinus stellaris</i>		+
	Triakidae	<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	+	
	Sphyrnidae	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>		+
	Squatinaidae	<i>Squatina squatina</i>	+	+
	Torpedinidae	indeterminate		+
	Rajidae	<i>Raja</i> sp.		+
	Dasyatidae	<i>Dasyatis</i> sp.	+	+
	Muraenidae	indeterminate	+	+
	Congridae	indeterminate	+	+
		Muraenidae/ Congridae	+	
	Gadidae	indeterminate	+	+
		<i>Gaidropsarus mediterraneus</i>	+	
	Serranidae	indeterminate	+	
		<i>Epinephelus</i>	+	+

		sp.		
		<i>Serranus</i>	+	
		<i>cabrilla/scriba</i>		
		<i>Serranidae</i>		+
		<i>small</i>		
	Sciaenidae	<i>Sciaena umbra</i>	+	
		<i>Umbrina</i>	+	
		<i>cirrosa</i>		
	Mullidae	indeterminate	+	
	Sparidae	indeterminate	+	+
		<i>Boops boops</i>	+	
		<i>Dentex dentex</i>	+	
		<i>Diplodus</i>	+	
		<i>annularis</i>		
		<i>Diplodus</i>		+
		<i>sargus</i>		
		<i>Diplodus</i> sp.	+	
		<i>Lithognathus</i>	+	+
		<i>mormyrus</i>		
		<i>Oblada</i>	+	+
		<i>melanura</i>		
		<i>Pagellus</i> sp.	+	
		<i>Pagellus</i>	+	+
		<i>erythrinus</i>		
		<i>Pagellus</i>	+	
		<i>erythrinus/</i>		
		<i>Pagrus pagrus</i>		
		<i>Pagrus pagrus</i>	+	
		<i>Sarpa salpa</i>		+
		<i>Sparus aurata</i>	+	
		<i>SpondylIOSoma</i>		+
		<i>cantharus</i>		
	Pomacentridae	<i>Chromis</i>	+	
		<i>chromis</i>		
	Labridae	indeterminate	+	+
	Scaridae	<i>Sparisoma</i>	+	
		<i>cretense</i>		
	Trachinidae	indeterminate	+	+
	Uranoscopidae	<i>Uranoscopus</i>	+	
		<i>scaber</i>		
	Gobiidae	<i>Gobius</i> sp.		+
	Blenniidae	<i>Blennius</i> sp.		+
	Sphyraenidae	<i>Sphyraena</i>	+	
		<i>sphyraena</i>		

	Scorpaenidae	<i>Scorpaena</i> sp.	+	
	Triglidae	indeterminate		+
	(Pleuronectiformes)	indeterminate	+	+
	Soleidae	indeterminate		
	Lophiidae	<i>Lophius piscatorius</i>	+	+
Marine schooling	Centracanthidae	indeterminate	+	+
	Sparidae	<i>Boops boops</i>	+	+
	Sparidae/ Centracanthidae		+	
	Clupeidae	indeterminate	+	+
	Atherinidae	indeterminate		+
Marine migrating	Carangidae	indeterminate	+	
		<i>Seriola dumerili</i>	+	
	Coryphaenidae	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>		+
	Scombridae	indeterminate	+	
		<i>Euthynnus alletteratus</i>	+	
		<i>Sarda sarda</i>		+
		<i>Scomber scombrus/ japonicus</i>	+	+
		<i>Thynnus</i> sp.	+	+
Euryhaline	Xiphiidae	<i>Xiphias gladius</i>	+	+
	Engraulidae	indeterminate	+	+
	Serranidae	<i>Dicentrarchus</i> sp.	+	+
	Sparidae	<i>Sparus aurata</i>	+	
	Sciaenidae	<i>Argyrosomus regius</i> (young)	+	
		<i>Umbrina cirrosa</i> (young)	+	
	Gobiidae	<i>Gobius</i> sp.	+	+
	Mugilidae	indeterminate	+	+
	Pleuronectidae	<i>Platichthys</i> sp.	+	
	Soleidae	<i>Solea</i> sp.	+	
Anadromous– catadromous	Acipenseridae	indeterminate	+	+
	Clupeidae	<i>Alosa</i> sp.	+	

Anguillidae	<i>Anguilla</i> <i>anguilla</i>	+	+
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*The table is based on Mylona (2008) Tables 5.1a–g and 5.3.

The majority of the fish caught in Greece in historical times are marine inshore species. They are both cartilaginous (with a skeleton made of cartilage instead of bones) and bony fishes. This group includes fish that are either solitary or live in small groups, depending on their age and life cycle. Large as well as tiny fish were caught in inshore waters (Mylona, 2008, Table 5.4); among these small fish such as the small sea breams (e.g. young *Pagellus erythrinus* or *Diplodus annularis*) and the combers (*Serranus* sp.) make up the mass of the catch, even though larger fish such as the groupers (*Epinephelus* sp.), the barracuda (*Sphyraena sphyraena*), the various sea breams, the parrot fish (*Sparisoma cretense*), the shark, and the sting ray (*Dasyatis* sp.) are not uncommon. Shellfish and other marine invertebrates, such as the octopus, the cuttlefish, the squid, the sea urchin, and crabs should be viewed as part of this domain, as they are all easily found near the coast, often caught in nets along with the fish, or collected from the rocks on the shore. The inshore fish are available throughout the Aegean, in different taxonomic combinations in each region.

A review of ancient fishing manuals such as Oppian's *Halieutica* and of more recent accounts of traditional fishing in the Aegean (e.g. Apostolides, 1883; Athanassopoulos, 1925; Zappas, 1968; Zachariou-Mamaliga, 1986) indicate that for the capture of this type of fish a wide range of multipurpose and specialized tools is employed, along with a large variety of crafty tricks (decoys, special baits, poisoning, etc.). A vivid image of just such a variety can be seen in the highly illustrative red-figure cup interior, attributed to the Ambrosios Painter (sixth century BC). There a boy perched on a rock by the sea is line-fishing, while at the same time a creel has been placed in the water (ARV 173, 9). In recent years, fishing for inshore fish, either from the coast or from a boat near the coast, has become more visible archaeologically through the multilevel analysis of fish bones and fishing implements (Mylona, 2003a, 2008; Rose, 2000; various papers in Bekker-Nielsen & Bernal Casasola, 2010). The basic five fishing methods of coastal fishing, i.e. hook and line, netting, trapping, poisoning, and spearing, lead to a vast number of specific tools, which vary in size and complexity (for an ethnographic account of these fishing methods in Greece before the Second World War see Leukadites, 1941; for technical characteristics see von Brandt, 1972). They all take advantage of the ethology of inshore fish and their natural tendencies to respond to certain stimuli (Muñiz, 2010). Representations in art and the ancient texts describe the types of tool used in coastal fishing quite extensively, even though there is some uncertainty on the correspondence of names to specific types of fishing tool (for a discussion of the actual ancient

fishing methods and their function see Gallant, 1985, 12–25; Bekker-Nielsen, 2005b; Bekker-Nielsen & Bernal Casasola, 2010). Archaeologically, some fishing methods for coastal fish are almost impossible to detect (e.g. poisoning, traps), while others leave behind the durable parts of the tools. Bronze hooks, lead net sinkers, and fishing spears are the most explicit and common such finds in excavations.

The significance of this fish resource lies in two major facts: first, inshore fish of one kind or another are available and exploitable all year round (with the exception of days of bad weather). Their capture depends only on the skill and the toolkit of the fisherman. Thus the fish market can be supplied fairly reliably, with fish of many kinds, small and large, cheap and expensive, and the fish can be a constant element of the menu. Second, fishing for inshore fish seems to have been one of those activities that remained unregulated by laws concerning ownership or access to the water or to the fish (as opposed to fishing for migratory or even euryhaline fish; see below) (Lytle, 2006, 6–36). In this manner, inshore fishing remained little documented, and for this reason little elaborated in the written sources.

Another group of marine fish caught in antiquity is those small species such as the anchovies (Engraulidae), the sardines (Clupeidae), the picarel (Centracanthidae), and often the bogue (*Boops boops*) that form large, sometimes enormous, shoals. These fish can be found seasonally, relatively close to the coast. Their presence exhibits a temporal patterning, but their seasonal migration is small scale, from shallow to deeper water, within the same geographical area. The tapping of this resource can result in an abundance of fish in each fishing episode. Oppian in his *Halieutica* in the second century AD vividly portrays the exploitation of one such type of fish, the *aphuae* (here it probably refers to sardines or anchovies; for the identification of *aphuae* in general see Thompson, 1947). After he described how enormous and dense the “*aphuae*” schools could be, he added:

Now when the fishermen behold them (the fish) huddled together, they gladly enclose them with their hollow seine-nets and without trouble bring ashore abundant booty and fill with the fry all their vessels and their boats and on the deep beaches they pile up heaps, an infinite abundance of spoil

(Opp. *H.* iv.468–503, transl. A.W. Mair).

Such shoaling fish exhibit a distinct geographical distribution.

Centracanthidae (mostly picarels and sprats) and the bogue (*Boops boops*) are better adapted to southern Aegean conditions (Vidalis & Tsimenidis, 1997), while Clupeidae (mostly sardines, shads, and herring) and Engraulidae (anchovies) are more abundant in the northern Aegean. This type of small fat-rich schooling fish was an important raw material for the production of various types of fish sauce or paste (see, e.g., Curtis, 1991, 57, 93–4, and references therein; Struder, 1994).

A third group of fish caught in antiquity is the open sea migrating species. These are pelagic fish, which appear seasonally, forming large schools. Their exploitation results in large concentrations of fish that often require some processing (see references in Curtis, 1991). The appearance of each species within this group in any particular geographical area is restricted to certain narrowly defined time-periods during the year. The pelagic migratory fish range in size from relatively small (e.g. the mackerels – *Scomber* sp.) to very large (tunas – *Thynnus* sp.), with several species such as the bonito (*Sarda* sp.), the little tunny, bluefin, or albacore (*Euthynus aletteratus*), and the pelamid (*Sarda sarda*) attaining medium sizes (Froese & Pauly, 2011). Although these are pelagic fish that roam the open seas, some species tend to approach the coast to within meters, thus becoming accessible, even using coast-based fishing technologies. The basic scheme in an Aegean context is that large shoals of these fish swim close to the shore following an anti-clockwise movement during the trophic migration to the Black Sea and the reproductive one back to the Mediterranean. In this yearly circle, certain areas in the Aegean sea are specially favored by these fish, due to coast morphology and the richness of the waters (see ethnographic observations by Athanassopoulos, 1923, 1924; Bintliff, 1977, part i, 117–22; Guest-Papamanoli, 1984, 1985).

The systematic exploitation of the migratory fish requires the use of specialized technology and communal effort (see Maggio, 2000, for a vivid description of present day tuna fishing in Sicily and Paraskeuopoulou (date unknown) for a discussion of this type of fishery in the eastern Black Sea). The fish schools are intercepted on their migratory route by stationary capture devices, which involve a kind of labyrinth constructed by nets and wooden poles extending from the coast to some distance into the sea. The “*thyneion*”¹, the tuna trap, is complemented by a watch tower, which either could be a wooden construction erected in the water or a high point on a steep coast. When the fish shoals approach the tuna trap fishermen capture them in the labyrinth and kill them by means of clubbing or spearing. Because massive catches are often produced in this manner, the ancient as well as the modern *thyneia* seem to co-exist with fish-processing establishments and often with salt pans.

The migratory fish and especially the largest of them, the several varieties of tunas, bonitoes, and pelamids, are among the most discussed fish in literature. Although they appear to be a rich fish resource, their importance in a Greek context has been repeatedly underestimated due to an emphasis placed by archaeologists and ancient historians on the unpredictability of their appearance at certain standard spots on the coast (e.g. Rose, 1994, 431–3). The epigraphical record, mostly Hellenistic, refers to the renting or taxation of “*thynskopeia*” i.e. watch-towers for migrating fish, which are rented by the interested fishermen (e.g. SIG⁴ 1000; for a presentation of all related

inscriptions see Rhode, 1890, and for a detailed discussion of all things related to the capture of tuna see Lytle, 2006, 37–145). The fact that there is a formalized manner of managing these issues clearly implies a repeated pattern of exploitation of an apparently dependable fish resource. There are detailed ethnographic observations of the way such a fishing system may operate from the admittedly much richer coasts of the Black Sea (e.g. Paraskeuopoulou, date unknown), the Italian coasts (e.g. Centola, 1999; Maggio, 2000), or the western Mediterranean (e.g. Trakadas, 2005). It is clear from these cases that the observed pattern of migratory fish is at least as reliable as the annual land crops. In an Aegean context, no comprehensive study of such a system exists, but this is probably more related to the state of sea-related research rather than to the lack of this type of fishing.

The fourth group of fish that was exploited in ancient Greece includes the euryhaline fish, those living in both brackish and seawater but usually breeding in the sea. These fish are commonly found in river deltas, estuaries, and coastal lagoons. Some, such as the grey mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) or the gilt-head sea bream (*Sparus aurata*) migrate as juveniles into the nourishing brackish waters to grow, and in such environments they are found in large numbers. There, these migrant species attain the best quality of flesh. Other fish, such as some members of the Sparidae family, enter such environments only occasionally (strangler species) (Koutrakis, Tsikliras, & Sinis, 2005). Euryhaline ecosystems usually sustain large populations of fish, which are traditionally exploited in a systematic manner with the use of stationary fish-entrapment devices (Guest-Papamanoli, 1984, 1985). Literary evidence suggests that the rights to exploit this fish resource were, at least in certain cases, regulated, often by sanctuaries (Lytle, 2006, 8–9, note 11; Mylona, 2008, 94–5, appendix 2).

Besides these major categories, ancient fishing targeted also, wherever the local topography permitted, freshwater fish in lakes or rivers and also anadromous and/or catadromous species such as the eels and the sturgeon. In certain cases, the catches were so massive or so regular that the fish were preserved for local consumption (for the case of fish bonanza at Lake Bolbe, Hegesand. *Commentaries*, FHG IV, 420 *ap.* Ath. 334e) or even exported over long distances (e.g. Kopaic eels exported to Athens: Antiphan. fr. 191; Ar. *Ach.* 884, 894; *Pax* 1013–4).

Fish Becoming Food. Travelling Fishmongers and Fish Markets

To understand the importance of fish as food in ancient Greece it is necessary to explore one crucial aspect in the relationship between fishing and fish eating: the distribution and marketing of fish, the ways in which fish became available to consumers. It appears that two distinct mechanisms were in place,

one dealing with fresh fish and the other with preserved fish in its various forms (for an analysis of the role of preserved fish in relation to the fresh ones see Mylona, 2008, 84–9; for a detailed treatment of the issue of preserved fish and its production and marketing, see Curtis, 1991). These mechanisms set in gear a transformative process by which fish turned from a harvested resource into a commodity and ultimately into a dish, a menu item. Such a transformation involved a number of technologies, social structures, and ideas, which were tightly enmeshed.

The management of fresh fish imposes certain insurmountable restrictions upon both fishermen and consumers. Fresh fish spoils quickly. In temperate areas such as Greece, and for most of the year, fish cannot last longer than one or two days at the very most, depending on the type of fish, its size, and the surrounding temperature.

The most obvious way to deal with the problem² is to restrict fish consumption to near its source, so that no considerable time elapses from the landing of fish to its cooking. An archaeological reflection of this necessity is that the sites that produce the most sizeable fish-bone assemblages are coastal ones (see Mylona, 2003a, 2008, Table 5.1a–g). Literary sources give a vivid picture of the direct passing of fish from the hands of fishermen to those of the consumers. Strabo, in the Roman period for example, commenting on the fish craze of certain people, described the landing of the boats loaded with a night's catch at Iasos, a small town in Asia Minor. The landing of fish was marked with the ringing of bells, which invited buyers (Str. 14.2.21). Customers apparently bought fish directly from the fishermen on the beach. The even more straightforward process of the fisherman and his family consuming fish from their own catch was apparently too obvious to warrant literary comment.

Transportation over short or medium distances from the coast to consumers is somewhat better documented. The case of transporting fish from coastal Argos to mainland mountainous Tegea some 40 km inland is an illustrative example that has been recorded twice, on two totally distinct instances, both dating in the Classical period (Arist. *Rh.* 6.55, IG IV² [1], 123; for discussion see Mylona, 2008, 76). A comic reference to travelling fishmongers elaborates on the issue for the same period (Antiph. fr. 69 KA *ap.* Ath. 358e–f).

Transportation of fish from inland sources was not unheard of either. The celebrated eels from Lake Kopais were regularly brought to Athens to be sold fresh, and occasionally they were specially and characteristically packaged (Antiphan. fr. 191; Arcestr.; Ar. *Ach.* 884, 894; *Pax* 1013–4).

Archaeologically, the short/medium-distance transportation of fish is attested through the recovery of marine-fish remains at inland sites. The remains of a grouper, a common sea bream, and a tuna have been recovered in the destruction levels of a Roman villa in Eleutherna, Crete, while shark, sting ray, grouper, and grey mullet remains have been found in Late Roman

deposits at the same site. Eleutherna is located in the foothills of Mount Ida, at a straight distance of 9 km from the sea, being however quite difficult to approach through the meandering paths of the mountainous terrain (Nobis, 1993, 115; Mylona, 2003b). The same is true for the case of Pyrgouthi, a Late Roman farmhouse located at the inland valley of Berbati in the Argolid (Mylona, 2005). A different type of archaeological evidence for the transportation of fresh fish some distance from the coast is epigraphical. A Hellenistic inscribed fish price list that was found at Akraephia, on the coast of Lake Kopais (Salviat & Vatin, 1971; Lytle, 2006, 190ff.) includes not only fish that were caught locally in Lake Kopais, but also a wide selection of marine fish, apparently caught in the rich waters of the Gulf of Euboea some 20 km to the east. Similar is probably the case of the less well-preserved price-list inscription found at Delphi (Vatin, 1966). What is interesting about this kind of sale is that it is based on the desire for fish, on demand, regardless of availability. The desire for marine fresh fish in areas far from the sea made the effort and dangers involved worth it.

More information about fish consumption is available when fish become the object of more formalized distribution and trade: in other words, when they are associated with established structures of Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman society. Fish become increasingly visible as the level of their enmeshing in urban life becomes more intense. Fresh fish sold in the urban market has been quite a stereotypical image as far as our perceptions of life in an ancient Greek polis are concerned (Davidson, 1996, 62). A wealth of passages in ancient texts, mostly comedies, Old, Middle, and New, have amply illustrated the issue (Davidson, 1997, 3–20, and references therein).

Most of the information available to us on fresh fish in a market context refers to Athens. It appears that the Athenian market, at least in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, was stocked with fish that could be caught in the surrounding seas, mostly the Saronic Gulf. When Xenophon in the fourth century BC recounted an episode of the Peloponnesian war (a raid on the Piraeus by the Spartan Teleutias in 388 BC) he vividly described the Athenian fleet of fishing boats returning to Piraeus at dawn, apparently ready to supply the Athenian market with the bounty of the Saronic gulf (Xen. *HG* 5.1.23). Whitebait from Phaleron and Megara, and a variety of other species, were sold at the fish stalls in the agora (Mylona, 2008, 45, Table 5.3). Fish originating in more distant areas were also sold there (see the case of the Kopaic eels mentioned earlier). Very little of this wealth has been uncovered archaeologically to date.

The various fish species that have been recovered at the Roman Akropolis on Mytilene (Ruscillo, 1993) and in the Late Roman Merchant's house at Itanos (Mylona, 2003b) appear to have been purchased at the market. The Itanos case is quite instructive. There, 24 fish have been identified, almost all coastal. Although the smaller taxa of the identified fish are represented with all parts

of their skeleton, the largest of them were mostly represented by head bones. This anatomical selectivity could be viewed as intentional and could be taken as an indication that only that part of the fish was bought and brought on site (for the preference for fish heads see Wilkins, 2000a, 18; Mylona, 2008, 111; Mylona, 2014). Most of the fish remains found in other urban contexts could also be viewed as purchases from the market, but no tangible indication of this is available.

The agora in Roman Corinth provides an archaeological testimony of where fresh fish were sold in an urban market. There, the *tholos* building, situated near the Peirene Fountain, on the road that connected the harbor to the forum, apparently housed the Roman fish and meat market. Architecturally it is very similar to a securely identified fish and meat market establishment in Pompeii (Mau, 1982, 94–101). At Corinth, two almost identical inscriptions, one in Latin and the other in Greek (Kent, 1966; West, 1931), advertise this trade. They are probably the signs hung above the two entrances to the establishment and they identified both the function of the building and the owners of the place. The *tholos* building found in the area of modern-day Glyphada, a suburb of Athens (ancient deme *Aexonae*), could be another case of a fish market (Keramopoulos, 1919; Konsolaki-Giannopoulou, 1990, 28–9, fig. 5).

The exact mechanisms by which the fish moved from the coast to the urban market are fairly obscure. The relation between fishmongers and fishermen in Athens (and perhaps other cities on the Hellenic peninsula) is not quite clear. In Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, fishermen and fishmongers formed different occupational groups often organized in professional guilds (Chouliara-Raiou, 2003, 361–2). The same was true in Rome during the Republic, where, however, the professional boundaries were somewhat more fluid (Chouliara-Raiou, 2003, 361, note 104). In Greece, the numerous references in the written sources to fishmongers, as opposed to the almost complete silence about fishermen, could perhaps support the idea that a similar separation was followed.

One of the most conspicuous and repeated motifs found among the extant fragments of ancient literature on fish and the fish market is the need to regulate fish prices. No consensus has been reached among scholars as to whether prices of goods, especially foodstuffs, were actually controlled or not and under what circumstances (Millett, 1990, 192, note 53; Arnott, 1996, 361–93). For the present discussion, the issue of the actual existence of such controlling mechanisms for fish prices is not crucial. What is important is the fact that fish in the context of an urban market (especially Athenian) are stereotypically characterized as expensive (Davidson, 1993, 56; for fish prices in Classical Athens as given in comedy see Boeckh, 1886). The ability to buy fish despite the difficulties (high prices, fishmonger's slyness), implies high status, education, and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. In the literary discourse around

fish in the market, which covers several centuries, fish appears as a luxury food (e.g. Davidson, 1993, 1997; Wilkins, 1993, 2000a). However, all these ideas that connect fish to luxury are only part of the issue. Shopping for fish by ordinary people and for purposes other than elite luxury display was obviously a parallel reality, even if it remains largely invisible. The presence of fish bones in all sorts of non-luxury contexts and the negative, but quite detailed, description of poor men buying cheap fish (e.g. Alex. fr. 159) imply that non-elite fish consumption was taking place as well and was perhaps quite widespread.

Conclusions

Fish in ancient Greece was an aquatic animal, a food item, a commodity, an idea. It was all that and it meant different things to different groups of people at the various stages in the process from fishing to fish eating. To understand fish eating one has to accept these categories and look for the shifting of meaning in different circumstances.

This chapter explores the variability that characterizes the Aegean marine environment and its fish stocks and discusses the ensuing variability in the types of fish resource that were exploited in ancient Greece and the multitude of technological or other responses of the fishermen to this variability. Finally, it discusses the mechanisms by which fish is transformed from an exploitable food resource to a commodity and ultimately to a dish in a menu.

Modern oceanographic and fishery research points to the diversity of the marine ecosystems within the Aegean and modifies the generalized assumption that the Aegean is an oligotrophic sea, with meager fish resources. The Aegean appears to possess very eutrophic regions or micro-regions interspersed with oligotrophic areas. The waters nearer the coasts are richer in nutrients. Productivity is closely related to the depth and slope gradient of the coast, a fact that adds another level of variability in the richness of the Aegean waters. Finally, the ichthyofauna of the Aegean is characterized by a large taxonomic variability and appears in varying combinations on different coasts, depending on environmental factors.

This intense variability was appreciated by fishermen in the past, and different fishing strategies and technologies were developed to take advantage of the different fish resources. It appears that the type of fish more extensively exploited in the Aegean in historical times was the inshore fish. This group consists in a variety of species, available collectively all year round, easily accessible even from the shore with simple technological means. Marine schooling and marine migrating fish have also been exploited to a considerable degree, but their archaeological or historical visibility is relatively restricted. The exploitation of the seasonal fish shoals is much more evident, mostly through indirect evidence. Both these resources produce an

abundance of catch, often requiring subsequent processing. Catching them requires not only specialized knowledge on the part of the fishermen (of shoal movement, weather, water conditions, etc.) but also, at least in the case of migrating fish, specialized fishing technology and communal effort. The euryhaline fish, those moving in and out of the brackish waters of estuaries, deltas, and lagoons, were another exploited fish resource. These are only lightly visible archaeologically, and can be better traced by inference through the literary tradition. Anadromous/catadromous fish and freshwater fish are an equally elusive, albeit certainly exploited, fish resource. Again, few actual fish remains and somewhat more substantial literary data attest to their exploitation, but, as in the previous case, the intensity of such exploitation remains obscure.

Both archaeology and the written record, literary and epigraphical, allow us to trace the way fish moved from the coast and the fishermen to the consumers via the fish market or with the aid of the fishmongers. The complex mechanisms that made fish available to the consumers point to yet another area of variability in the movement from fishing to fish eating.

FURTHER READING

The best way to be introduced to ancient fishing and navigate through the extended and diverse literature on the topic is probably by starting from certain recent monographs or edited volumes. Mylona's book (2008) on fish eating in ancient Greece provides a critical review of the literature and explores fish in a biographical manner, by examining issues related to the production of fish, their distribution and marketing, the social contexts of their consumption, and the involvement of the senses in the way the ancient Greek societies shaped their choices and ideas about fish. Although this work makes extensive use of historical, biological, and anthropological data and methodologies, its focus is archaeological and it provides detailed tables and appendixes of fish remains and fish-related artifacts from Greece. Ephraim Lytle's doctoral thesis (Lytle, 2006) is an excellent detailed discussion of the role of marine fisheries in the ancient economy, based mostly on written evidence but taking into account the specifics of fish biology and ecology and the theoretical ramifications involved in the treatment of ancient economy. This study revolves around the issues of access rights to fisheries, of the organization of tuna fishing, and of the taxation on fish. A recent volume edited by Bekker-Nielsen & Bernal Casasola (2010) provides a wide but also in-depth overview of ancient fishing technology. The individual papers highlight various case studies in a comprehensive manner but many of them emphasize methodological issues as well, thus becoming an excellent introduction to the intricacies of the research in ancient fishing technology. These strengths are also shared by an edited volume on ancient fishing and fish processing in the Black Sea by T. Bekker-Nielsen (2005a). Despite the

specific geographic focus of this book, the broad scope of most of its papers makes it basic reading.

NOTES

- 1 Although these are called fish traps, in reality they catch a variety of species, members of the Scombridae family and others.
- 2 Fish preservation, which is the second most obvious way to deal with the quick spoiling of fish, will not be discussed here.

CHAPTER 15

Agriculture

Geoffrey Kron

Introduction

It is, of course, tautological that the rich and varied diet enjoyed by the Greeks and Romans (André, 1981; Wilkins *et al.*, 1995; Davidson, 1997; Dalby, 2000b; Garcia Soler, 2001; Kron, 2005a; Papatthomas, 2006; Kron, 2008a, 79–85; Auberger, 2010; Kron, 2012; for a more conservative position, see Garnsey, 1999; Chandezon in this volume) would not have been possible without a very productive and sophisticated agrarian economy. But it is equally the case that the existence of an affluent and broad urban elite and middle class, and their demand for new or exotic fine foods, was critical in stimulating agricultural innovation. Although the Greeks and Romans seem to have had certain fixed ideas about gastronomy, consistently preferring olive oil to animal fats or butter, for example, despite close contact with the Celts, and were less adventurous than their Islamic successors (Watson, 1983; van der Veen, 2011) in incorporating Near Eastern and Central or East Asian foods, they showed considerable creativity in experimenting with the consumption of wild foods, seafood, and wild game, and did import or adapt to their own farming regime a wide range of cereals, legumes, fruits, vegetables, spices, and condiments (Miller, 1969; Thüry & Walter, 1997; Bakels & Jacomet, 2003). The technical advances in Greco-Roman agronomy, moreover, were remarkable, incorporating many of the principal features of the agricultural revolution of late-Medieval Netherlands and eighteenth-century England (Kerridge, 1967), including convertible husbandry, crop rotations, new fodder crops, and improved livestock breeding, along with innovations in viticulture and in grafting and cross-breeding new tree fruit, grape and vegetable cultivars, and capital intensive methods of fish and game farming virtually unheard of before the latter half of the twentieth century (see Kron, 2012, and below for references). Extensive trade links throughout the Mediterranean and Europe, the Near East, Africa, and Asia made a wide range of imported foods available, and stimulated agricultural production for prosperous urban markets far beyond one's local communities (Kron, 2012, 160–6), and the presence of large numbers of immigrants and slaves from a range of cultures likely exposed Greeks and Romans to a range of new foods and foodways, however little our extant sources sometimes reflect this diversity.

Arable Farming and Cereal and Legume

Production

The foundation of the Greco-Roman diet, providing relatively inexpensive calories for the daily subsistence of the poor, came from cereal production (Amouretti, 1986; Erdkamp, 2005), but it is unlikely that cereals and legumes provided nearly as large a proportion of the calories in the diet as once suggested by Foxhall and Forbes (1982), for example. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western European, and the early twentieth-century Greek and Southern Italian, working-class and peasant populations, used as a basis for their estimates, were more poorly fed than most ancient Greeks or Romans, and the modern Mediterranean diet was, until relatively recently, poorer in protein from meat and seafood, and in calories from animal fats, as well as significantly poorer in olive oil, an excellent, and healthy, source of calories from fat, and in fresh fruit and vegetables (Kron, 2005a, 2008b, 79–85). Moreover, in marked contrast to the Early Modern era, it was the conscious policy of many Greco-Roman governments to keep grain prices as low and stable as possible, intervening relatively consistently in the market when necessary, and encouraging large-scale imports of grain from the Black Sea, Egypt, Sicily, and other potential surplus cereal producers (Migeotte, 1998; Erdkamp, 2005). As a result, as in seventeenth-century Holland (see de Vries, 1974), many farmers in Classical Greece and Roman Italy transitioned from cereal production towards intensive mixed farming and the production of cash crops for local urban markets and for export (Kron, 2008b, 2012, 2015b). Wine, olive oil, garden vegetables, fruit, nuts, and livestock were all potentially much more lucrative than most cereal grains, and some are less vulnerable to summer drought or the insufficient or irregular rainfall that affect at least some Mediterranean micro-climates, although such concerns must not be exaggerated. At least since the influential work of Jardé (1925), most modern scholars of Greco-Roman agriculture, even leaders in rehabilitating our appreciation of ancient agronomy, such as White (1970), have shared in modern Northern European prejudices about the inevitable underdevelopment of Mediterranean agriculture, most tend to exaggerate the environmental constraints of Southern European farming (Pepelasis & Thompson, 1960), suggesting that they inevitably led to poor yields, few large livestock, insufficient manure, and the need to use an extensive system of biennial fallow, ignoring the role of underpopulation, poverty, lack of markets, and heavy competition from surplus food production of wealthier and more highly urbanized intensive farming regimes in modern Northern Europe for this reversal of the ancient comparative advantage for the Mediterranean (Kron, 2004a, 2008b, 175–7; see also Horden & Purcell, 2000, 463–84; Harris, 2005a).

Our literary evidence for Roman cereal yields shows little evidence of underdevelopment vis-a-vis Northern Europe; in fact, yields were double or triple those obtained in the Medieval three-field system, and could match

some of the most productive Modern arable farms (Spurr, 1986, 82–8; Erdkamp, 2005, 34–46; Goodchild, 2007, 246–97, 414–8), or Italy as a whole in the 1970s (Goodchild, 2007, 337). Moreover, Greco-Roman agriculture was based on the full integration of livestock into arable farming, and Greek as well as Roman cattle and sheep were markedly superior to Celtic or Medieval livestock, renowned for their size and fertility, and were bred for meat, as well as for traction or wool, on a large scale (Magerstedt, 1859, *passim*; Rosivach, 1994; Chandezon, 2003; Howe, 2008, 58–65; Kron, 2008a, 175–6). As a result, Greek scientists (e.g. Thphr. *CP* 3.20.2–4) and Roman agronomists make it clear that compost and manure were used extensively in arable farming, and were carefully managed (White, 1970, 125–45; Spurr, 1986, 128–31), applied in quantities matching some of the best seventeenth-century Dutch practice (Kron, 2008b, 76, n. 30). In addition to farmyard manure and compost, we have evidence for the use of manures imported onto the farm, including nightsoil, potash and wood ash, and bone, and of marling with chalk or calcium carbonate (Plin. *Nat.* 17.50; Col. 2.14.5; Pallad. 10.3.2; cf. Fussell, 1971). In modern Greece, as late as 1960, manuring seems to have been much less common: only 10% of agricultural land in Greece received any artificial fertilizer whatsoever, and only 3.7% received any manure (Pepelasis & Thompson, 1960, 149), which is not surprising, given that the cattle still used in the Byzantine era for ploughing had been replaced by mules and donkeys, and that sheep and goats grazed on fallow and macchia, along with a few pigs or fowl, had become the only domestic animals.

In addition to aggressively using manure and compost to replenish nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus, trace elements, and soil-fertilizing bacteria, and to build up humus, Greco-Roman agronomists offer detailed and sound advice on seed selection (Spurr, 1986, 41–2); effective tillage and frequent hoeing and harrowing to destroy weeds (Spurr, 1986, 42–65); superior metal tools and mechanical reapers, such as the *vallus* (White, 1970, 182–3; Kolendo, 1980, 71–84; Kron, 2012, 169–70, n. 69–70); improved crop rotations; and the substitution of legumes, whether for human consumption, fodder, or green manure, for bare fallow (White, 1970, 110–40, 202; Carandini, 1985, 133–7; Spurr, 1986, 117–25). Arguably the single most important factor (Kerridge, 1967) in boosting arable yields was the introduction of ley farming or convertible husbandry (Kron, 2000, 2005b, 2008a, 2008b, 73–5 with further references; see also Grey, 2007, 366–7), still the most effective system of intensive mixed farming today. Although periods of intensive cultivation and manuring can enrich the soil in ways which can be traced even after centuries of long-fallow or grazing, as in the Tauric Chersonese (Lisetskii *et al.*, 2012), and archaeobotanists have detected some circumstantial evidence for convertible husbandry in the presence of weeds associated with cereal cultivation in meadow hay from Pompeii (Ciaraldi, 2007, 84–5, 158–9), archaeological evidence for the spread of convertible husbandry is inevitably tenuous, although its spread can likely be confirmed by increases in the size of

livestock, as I argue below.

Greco-Roman arable farming was not only technically sophisticated and productive, but it was notable for the wide range of cereals and legumes cultivated, the result of a relatively large and affluent urban middle class with sophisticated tastes and a desire for novelty. Naked wheats, particularly hard and bread wheats, had become, in the Classical period, by far the most important and prestigious cereal grain for human consumption, primarily made into a wide range of breads, of which Athenaeus lists more than 70 types attested in ancient literature over several centuries (Amouretti, 1986, 128), as well as cakes and pastries. However barley, emmer wheat, spelt, millet, rye, oats, and several other types of traditional or exotic cereal seem to have retained a modest place in the diet, in drinks, breads, porridges, polentas, cakes, and special, often ritual, uses – in the case of barley, at least in Greece, a significant place (Amouretti, 1986, 113–51; Spurr, 1986, 98–100). Archaeobotanical studies have found evidence for many of these cereals on a range of Greco-Roman sites, albeit in small quantities (Heinrichs, 2015).

Legumes were extremely important in Roman arable agriculture as a source of fodder for livestock, but a number of species, including beans, peas, lupins, lentils, and chickpeas, were also reasonably popular foods (Spurr, 1986, 105–16), although they do not seem to have played as important a role as a substitute for meat protein among the poor as in nineteenth-century Europe (Spurr, 1986, 111). Among field crops some mention ought to be made of wild plants, such as asparagus, capers, and thistles, which the Greeks and Romans appreciated a great deal (Amigues, 2004). Although their consumption is sometimes offered as evidence of the subsistence strategies of poor peasants (Frayn, 1975), these were in fact more likely to be sought after delicacies, featuring in Apicius' recipes and often found in well-off households (Ciaraldi, 2007, 115), and would have offered a lucrative trade, as they do today for Greek smallholders (Clark, 1997). For example, Pliny (*Nat.* 19.55; 19.152–3) describes thistles as an expensive delicacy, with some plots near Carthage and Corduba yielding revenues of 6 000 HS per *iugerum*.

Animal Husbandry and Meat Production

One of the principal reasons for the dramatic improvements in the productivity of Greco-Roman farming over that of the Bronze and Iron Ages, and over most Western European farming in the Middle Ages, as we have already alluded, came from the integration of livestock into arable farming, most notably by the use of convertible husbandry. However, while we can be reasonably confident, based on the texts of the Roman agronomists, that Greco-Roman farmers fully understood the basic principles behind ley farming, grazing and forage management, and crop rotations effectively integrating leguminous fodder crops (White, 1970; Carandini, 1985; Kron,

2000, 2004b), it would be very difficult to demonstrate how fully such innovations were actually put into practice, were it not possible to infer their widespread use from dramatic increases in the size of cattle and most domestic livestock, as well as from variations in the pace and completeness of these increases. Archaeozoological evidence, first collected in Germany in the 1920s, and now increasingly abundant for France, and to a lesser extent Italy and even Greece (Lauwerier, 1988; Lepetz, 1996; Peters, 1998; Kron, 2002; Columbeau, 2002; Chandezon, 2004; MacKinnon, 2004; Kron, 2008a, 183–5, 2008b, 74–5, Kron, 2015a), show clearly that large improved livestock, comparable in size to some of the best improved breeds of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, become dominant in Greece and Southern Italy by the fifth or fourth century, in Roman central Italy by the third century, and in Cisalpine Gaul and the interior of Southern and Apennine Italy by the first century AD (MacKinnon, 2010). For France and Germany, the evidence is a good deal richer and one can clearly identify the simultaneous co-existence of two distinct breeds of livestock, the smaller Celtic breeds, which persist for some time, particularly in *Germania libera*, for example, and the larger Greco-Roman phenotypes. By the end of the third century AD, the larger livestock become virtually universal in the Roman-occupied regions of Germany and France, although, significantly, smaller Celtic cattle remain nearly universal in Britain, which was also very superficially affected by Roman foodways. We cannot conclude from the persistence of some small livestock that the more advanced techniques of convertible husbandry and other innovations were unknown, since some smaller livestock breeds have characteristics that make them attractive, such as the highly productive Alpine milk-producing breeds called *cevae* (Col. 6.24.5), or certain hardy small sheep breeds, which were perfectly adequate for generalized medium wool production, particularly when exploiting mediocre grazing land. Nor is it impossible to keep some of the more demanding large livestock using relatively crude methods, by simply providing supplementary feeding and taking special care of their needs. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that the spread of large livestock provides one of our most reliable indices of the proportion of farmers who understand and practice the best methods of intensive mixed farming, and this would suggest that the works of the leading agronomists are strongly representative of, and influential in shaping, the practices of farmers, at least in strongly Hellenized or Romanized regions.

The most important innovations in animal husbandry revolved around improved nutrition and new types of forage. Convertible husbandry or ley farming is the most intensive method of mixed farming, helping to maximize both arable yields and livestock production. It allowed the creation of stable artificial pastures or meadows with a strong balance of legumes to grasses, often with seeding of medicks, clovers, and other high-quality annual or perennial forage legumes, with additional forage provided by the leguminous fodder crops or green manure crops introduced into the rotations of the

continuously cultivated arable. Many other innovations were also used to enhance livestock nutrition, however. A wide range of outstanding new fodder crops was introduced, valuable as rich sources of protein, highly palatable, and capable of very high yields, including, most notably, alfalfa, the queen of forages, as it is often called, but also the valuable drought-resistant shrub version, *Medicago arborea* or tree medick. Irrigated meadows are lauded as early as Cato the Elder, but with the introduction of alfalfa the potential productivity of water meadows increased dramatically, yielding up to 10 substantial haymows a year of protein-rich forage. Improved nutrition not only allowed significant increases in the size of livestock, and sped up the growth process, it helped produce finer-fleeced sheep, comparable to the modern Merino, and it also enhanced their reproductive capacity, allowing sheep to produce twins significantly more often, and pigs to farrow twice a year and produce more, and healthier, piglets. Improved nutrition was combined with selective breeding in order to stabilize and consolidate these gains, although we know relatively few specifics of the techniques and, aside from attempting to tie literary descriptions to skeletal differences from different regional zooarchaeological deposits, our ability to recognize breeds and varieties is still limited (Peters, 1998, 98–105, 112–13; MacKinnon, 2010).

The advances in Greco-Roman veterinary medicine were also remarkable, and likely did a great deal to improve the everyday care and health of most livestock. We have a very rich Greek veterinary literature, primarily concentrated on the care of horses, with many recommendations on cattle transmitted by the Roman agronomists from Mago, and the soundness of the ancient veterinarians' anatomical and diagnostic knowledge, as well as the effectiveness of their huge range of surgical procedures, matching virtually all of the modern techniques in use before the mid-twentieth century, has been confirmed by modern veterinary experts (Moulé, 1891, 147–66; Senet, 1953, 43, 83–6; Peters, 1998, 209–10). Recent work on the Roman veterinarian profession has also confirmed that access to veterinary services was by no means rare, and almost certainly much more common than for the farmers of modern livestock before the late nineteenth or twentieth century (Brill, 2011). Without the breakthroughs of Koch and Pasteur, of course, relatively little effective treatment was available for most viral or bacterial diseases, but the spread of infectious diseases was controlled using quarantining and culling, the most common approach in many cases of diseases of domestic livestock even today.

Game and Fish Farming

Some of the most striking evidence for the diversification of ancient

agriculture fostered by the rich diet of upper and many middle class Romans (and Greeks) comes from the large role played by wild game, particularly farmed game, in supplementing the usual range of meats from domestic livestock (André, 1981; Rinkewitz, 1984; Auberger, 2010, 87–8; Kron, 2008a). I have discussed this issue in much greater depth elsewhere (Kron, 2015a, 2015b), so I have relatively brief here. Although fish, seafood, wild game, and most domestic and wild fowl were clearly prestigious foods, disproportionally eaten, along with pork, and to a lesser extent lamb and kid, by the affluent (Schibler & Furger, 1988, 27–8, 80–92; cf. Kron, 2015b), as opposed to cheaper meats such as beef or mutton, the remarkable strides made in fish and game farming put these specialty meats within the reach of many people of modest means. As early as the first century BC the feasts of *collegia* of skilled craftsmen featured a range of wild game, including not just venison or wild boar, but also geese, duck, peacock, and eventually pheasant (Var. *R* 3.2.16); and by the time of Diocletian, as is clear from his price edict, venison cost no more than pork; wild boar was comparable to lamb or kid; and duck, goose, and squab were no more expensive than the cheapest meats, beef and mutton. Even guinea fowl, thrushes, quail, partridge, and peacock were well within the means of much of the society, and more expensive game birds such as pheasant were affordable enough to be the realistic object of a significant luxury trade. Accounts of both Greek and Roman gastronomy, descriptions of diets, and representations of farming and food consumption or marketing, on mosaics and wall-paintings all show fish, seafood, and game playing a prominent role in the ancient diet, and this impression can be unambiguously corroborated with an abundance of concrete archaeozoological evidence. Recent studies reveal a wide range of sites, from cities and small towns, to villages, legionary camps, villas, and modest farms, in which wild game represents a significant proportion of the meat consumed, at times reaching 20% or more. Not only do these sites show a large proportion of game, however, but they also reveal a remarkably large range of wild game species (Kron, 2008a, 189–91, Table 8.3, 193–203, Table 8.4), including most of the popular modern varieties, but also many palatable species, relatively rare today, but well represented in ancient texts or bone deposits, such as the crane, golden plover, song thrush, swan, flamingo, and ostrich. Although many deposits from less affluent communities are significantly lower in the proportion of game, typically ranging from 1 to 3%, it is important to remember that even these game-poor sites generally have a larger proportion than the 0.3% that game meat represented in Western Europe and North America in the early 1970s (Krostitz, 1979, Table 1).

Varro and Columella make it clear just how eager enterprising farmers were to show off the large profits they made from expanding markets for exotic new game species among affluent consumers, and experimenting with large-scale game farming. (Var. *R* 3.10.4). The recommendations of the agronomists are detailed and extremely well researched and sound,

corresponding closely to the practice of contemporary game farmers, and would have been very effective in ensuring that the animals could grow quickly and reproduce at a brisk rate (Rinkewitz, 1984; Kron, 2008a, 186–204; Bartoldus, 2012, 189–213; Kron, 2015b).

Although some wild game no doubt continued to be acquired through hunting, farming can dramatically increase game production, by protecting the animals from predators, providing good grazing, and supplementary feeding, particularly during the winter and times of shortage and high nutritional needs, such as mating and nursing. Red deer on contemporary Scottish game farms have better reproduction rates, lower mortality for their young, and grow both larger and significantly faster than deer in the wild, growing nearly twice as heavy as deer in the wild, and all this in as little as two or three years rather than the nine or more that deer will normally need to reach their final weight (Fletcher, 1989).

While it is difficult to unambiguously identify ancient game farms from archaeological evidence, plausible candidates have been found in fourth-century BC Kassope (Columbeau, 2000, 155) and at Neftenbach in Roman Switzerland, the latter a particularly striking case, since it seems that smoked venison was being packed and exported on a significant scale (Olive & Deschler-Erb, 1999). A fortuitous find from a legionary fort in Batavia offers further evidence for the trade in wild game, in this case the breasts of 28 thrushes packed in honey syrup, here discovered in the hands of the consumer (Lauwerier, 1993).

One of the most capital intensive and impressive developments in Roman *pastio villatica*, of course, was the development of fish farming, particularly the creation of highly advanced hydraulic concrete fish tanks for the intensive aquaculture of marine species (Giacopini, Marchesini, & Rustico, 1994; Higginbotham, 1997; Kron, 2008a, 204–13, 2008c; Marzano & Brizzi, 2009; Marzano, 2013c). Although Varro and Cicero enjoyed teasing some of the pioneers of Roman mariculture for their bold investments in new experimental techniques, and some modern scholars have long assumed that these fish farms were built for show rather than for profit, their innovations anticipate most of the critical developments of modern intensive aquaculture, and, once perfected, would have produced dramatic increases in productivity and, as the rapid spread of these farms suggests, very healthy profits. By the early empire, more than 82 substantial maritime fish farms had been built along the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic coasts of Italy alone, and probably many more, given the poor state of preservation of most ancient maritime fish-tanks and the limited resources devoted to finding such facilities. Roman fish farmers not only created hydraulic concrete enclosures in the sea; but also introduced artificial feeding; made provision for the aeration and interchange of water in order to keep up oxygen levels and disperse ammonia; created separate spawning and nursery enclosures; and Sergius Orata most likely introduced

heated fish-tanks for the gilthead seabream, in order to prevent disease and maximize productivity during the winter. The modern transition from extensive to intensive fish farming has seen production rise from around 150 kg/ha to 200 000 kg/ha or more, while significantly reducing the time fish take to reach a marketable weight, using the same critical innovations first securely attested for the Romans. A very impressive range of fish was successfully farmed, not just modern mainstays like the European seabass, gilthead seabream, and gray mullets, but also species still farmed on a very small scale, if at all, today, such as the moray eel, dentex, saddled seabream, meagre, monkfish, sole, turbot, and the prized but demanding red mullet (Kron, 2008c, 177–9). Popular shellfish species, such as the oyster and mussel, were also cultivated artificially on a significant scale, and exported in large quantities throughout Western Europe, appearing on more than 100 different sites in Switzerland, Austria, and Southern Germany alone, most many miles from the sea (Thüry, 1990). Although it does not fall under the purview of agriculture, a sophisticated industry of capture fisheries (Sahrhage, 2002), and of fish processing, for *garum* and *salsamenta* or salt-fish (Wilson, 2006), helped supplement, and also, presumably, supply fish food to, Roman aquaculture, this large source of inexpensive farmed fish for mass consumption.

Wine Production

Wine production, in the ancient world as today, is one branch of agriculture, which is as much art as science, and particularly suited to subtle innovation and connoisseurship. Wine was the principal alcoholic beverage among both Greeks and Romans, who seem to have preferred it to beer, which was traditional among the Celts, Germans, and Egyptians, and viticulture was the object of a rich and sophisticated Greco-Roman agronomic literature (Thphr. *CP* 3.11-6; Cato *Agr.* 23–6; Plin. *Nat.* 14; Col. *R* 12.18–40). However, there was also a long tradition of fine wines, based on both (initially regional) grape varieties and the subtle differences in flavor derived from local micro-climates and *terroirs*, facilitated by ease of transport by sea, precocious urbanization, and local independence, all encouraging experimentation in building up an impressive range of wine-making techniques. From the works of Cato (Rossiter, 1981), but particularly of Columella and Pliny, it is clear that many grape varieties had been developed specifically for wine production. Although Columella and Pliny only discuss 34 specific varieties of grape that they particularly recommend, Pliny claimed to know of more than 80 varieties known for producing fine wines (Tchernia, 1986, 322–41, 350–7; Kron, 2012, 162, n. 32), which certainly compares favorably with the 50 or so grape varieties used widely by modern growers in the 1970s (Johnson, 1971, 22–5). Nor were these growers conservative in their approach, as Pliny proudly boasts of the great advances made since the days of Cato (*Nat.* 14.45). New

varieties of grape developed for Gaul, for example, such as the Allobroga and Biturica, were quickly introduced into Italian vineyards (Plin. *Nat.* 14.26–8), and Roman vintners were successful in adapting vines capable of producing wine in the most unfavorable climates, as in Jordan (Brun, 2004b, 138–51, 232–44), along the Moselle (Brun, 2005, 134–51), and even Britain (Brun, 2005, 129–30). Moreover, although many of their suggestions scandalized the brilliant nineteenth-century French oenologist and ancient wine historian Raymond Billiard, the recommendations of Roman agronomists to add small quantities of salt, gypsum, marble dust, and Bentonite to wine have been vindicated scientifically, and shown to have significant value for stabilizing wine, controlling its acidity, restarting fermentation, or clarifying wine of impurities (Thurmond, 2006, 111–64; cf. Kron, 2012, 171, n. 74).

Significant advances in the scale of production and marketing accompanied these improvements in the quality and variety of Greco-Roman wine. Roman wine yields were remarkably high (Tchernia, 1986, 359–60) reaching levels consistently matched by French wineries only since the 1950s, when significant manuring or fertilization began to be consistently applied (Kron, 2012, 159–60), and Roman wine became inexpensive enough to reach a true mass market (Tchernia, 1986, 172–9). Increases in quantity as well as quality are suggested by the massive investments in the number and size of wine pressing facilities (Brun, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Marzano, 2013b), and from the huge scale of the wine trade through the Mediterranean and into Western Europe and the Near East, as attested by the wine amphoras, uncovered in vast quantities from virtually every Greco-Roman site (Kron, 2012, 163). The scale of the trade is difficult to quantify with any exactitude, although Tchernia is able to make some reasonable and impressive projections for the export of Italian wine into Gaul, but it surely dwarfed the level of nineteenth-century France, which boasted 40% of the world's vineyards, yet exported only 2.6% of its wine beyond its borders in 1828 (Kron, 2012, 163).

Arboriculture

The Greeks and Romans put a great deal of emphasis on arboriculture in their agronomic literature (see, e.g., Thphr. *CP*; Col. *Arb.*), concentrating on the olive, but cultivating a wide range of fruit and nut trees, and there is abundant evidence for the prominent role of olive oil, fresh olives, fruit, and nuts in the ancient diet. Although most assume that olive oil, a critical part of the modern Mediterranean triad of wheat, wine, and olive oil, has always been consumed in significant quantities, the large-scale production well attested in the ancient world seems not to have been matched until well into the 20th century in most of Italy and Greece. For example, in the Southern Argolid under Venetian rule

there were barely 1.3% as many olive trees as one finds today (Forbes, 2000, 65, Table 3.8), or, most likely, in the ancient world. Estimates of the large-scale state import of Spanish olive oil into Rome, based on the capacity of the discarded amphorae in the huge dump of Monte Testaccio, suggest an annual consumption in the city of at least 20 kg per year, comparable to modern Italian or Greek rates, and six or seven times as great as the levels attested in Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century (Kron, 2012, 161). As Jean-Pierre Brun (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) and David Mattingly (1988a, 1988b, 1993; Hitchner & Mattingly, 1993) have amply documented, Varro's claim that Italy was so fully planted with olive and other fruit trees as to appear to be one vast orchard is increasingly corroborated by a growing mass of archaeological evidence. North Africa, Italy, Greece, Spain, Southern France, and Portugal, even Egypt and Jordan, show large olive plantations and innumerable oil presses, ranging from small presses in very modest farmhouses of 150–500 m² (Rossiter, 1981, 348–9, 357–8; Kron, 2015a), to massive plants with more than 20 presses on large estates in Gaul, Spain, or North Africa, as at Kherbet Agoub, with its capacity to press up to 5000 hl of oil (Brun, 2004b, 233–8; Marzano, 2013b).

The work of Theophrastus and Cato make it clear that standards of arboriculture had reached an extremely high level from a relatively early stage in both Greek and Roman agronomic development, with careful attention to irrigating, pruning, grafting, trenching, manuring, and spacing plantations, as well as to ensuring the freshness, quality, and taste of the fruit harvested and of the oil extracted (Thphr. *CP* 1.6; 3.2–10; Brun, 2003, 132–5; Foxhall, 2007a, 97–129). While olive oil was available in a number of different grades (Col. *R* 12.21–2; Amouretti, 1986, 179–81), with even such unpalatable by-products as *amurca* fully exploited (Amouretti, 1986, 193–4) and ordinary grades of oil widely exported throughout the Mediterranean, the best olive oil was much appreciated for its taste and all the more likely to be widely prized and traded (Hor., *Satires* 2.8.43–4; Brun, 2003, 161–3), with Columella and Pliny identifying more than a dozen good oil-producing olive cultivars in Italy alone (Brun, 2003, 124–5).

Although olives, with their value as fruit, or as olive oil for use in food and cooking, in athletics, for cosmetics, soaps, and perfumes, and as a lubricant or a source of light (Amouretti, 1986, 177–96; Foxhall, 2007a, 85–95), were presumably the single most important and lucrative tree crop, there was a very large market for fruit and nuts, and not only among the wealthy (Kron, 2012, 164–5). A wide range of fruits and nuts have been identified in modest homes in Pompeii and Herculaneum (Ciaraldi, 2007), in sites throughout Northern Europe (Bakels & Jacomet, 2003), particularly in legionary forts and camps, and even, for example, among Egyptian quarry workers (van der Veen, 1998). Figs were produced in such large quantities that some cheap figs were used as feed for pigs or geese, in order to enhance the flavor of their flesh (Cappers,

2006, 165), but other popular and relatively inexpensive fruits, such as apples, were so popular that farmers produced many different cultivars (41 pear, 28 fig, and 22 apple), duly listed by Pliny, many named for prominent Roman equestrians or senators (Plin. *Nat.* 15.35–117; see Kron, 2012, 165, n. 47). Through careful selection, grafting, reproduction, and cross-breeding, the size, and presumably taste (cf. Thphr. *CP* 2.14-5), of many varieties of fruit were improved and standardized, as we can see from analyses of large amphoras full of peach pits (Sadori *et al.*, 2009, 49–53), and comparison with examples from other sites. The peach is a good example of a fruit introduced into cultivation in Greece and then Rome in the Classical era, and raised to a high standard (Sadori *et al.*, 2009), as is the watermelon (van der Veen, 2004), but there is also good evidence for the import, often on a significant scale (Bakels & Jacomet, 2003; Amigues, 2005), of fruit and nuts that could not be successfully grown in the Mediterranean, such as dates or coconuts (Kron, 2012, 164, n. 44).

Market Gardening

Although the agronomists tell us much less about market gardening than wine production, arboriculture, or animal husbandry, it is clear from their scattered remarks that the technical standards and the level of investment in horticulture was very high, and, as with fruit orchards, there is evidence of a broad market. Since market gardening has been widely neglected in modern scholarship on ancient agriculture (but see White, 1970, 246–7; Flach, 1990, 258–74; Farrar, 1998; Henderson, 2004; Frass, 2006), I will devote rather more space to the subject here.

The *suburbium* of Rome, the largest ancient market for garden produce (Frass, 2006, 163–73), was arguably the most intensively and profitably cultivated countryside in the pre- or even early industrial world, rivaled only by seventeenth-century Holland, or late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London, as Werner Sombart recognized long ago, yet even London was unlikely to have been as highly developed. Although it was, by the mid-eighteenth century, the largest urban market in Europe since the fall of the Roman empire, with some of Europe's best market gardens, such as Neat House, on the banks of the Thames, extending over 200 acres, and producing £200 000 per year, at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Webber, 1972, 31–2), vegetables played a limited role in the working-class diet, even when consumption slowly began to improve at the end of the nineteenth century (Burnett, 1979), and even among the aristocracy and Royal court, standards were modest indeed. Until Queen Victoria took the initiative in creating a new market garden at Kew, the Royal gardens were poorly managed and unproductive. In 1717 they barely produced six plates a day of herbs and salads, despite the dedication of 73 acres and £4000 per year (Campbell, 1984, 100–1). William Marshall's survey of agriculture in England, published

in 1817, devotes only one page to kitchen-garden grounds, noting that the garden plots of Surrey, serving London, constituted only around 3500 acres (Marshall, 1817, 401), surely far less than the gardens in Rome and its *suburbium*, where, as a mass of archaeological work confirms, a dense network of *horti* and villas surrounded Rome for a distance of 25 km, and even further along the banks of the Tiber (Kolendo, 1994; Quilici-Gigli, 1994; Morley, 1996; Pergola, Santangeli Valenzani, & Volpe, 2003; Patterson, 2004; Frass, 2006, 163–73; Goodchild, 2007; Marzano, 2013a). As a rich tradition of Roman poetry attests (Dalby, 2000b, 30–56 and *passim*), this region was famous for many distinct specialties of produce, like Ostia or Aricia, both famous their vegetables (Plin. *Nat.* 19.110), particularly their leeks (Col. *R* 10.139) and cabbage (Plin. *Nat.* 19.140–1). Although our most detailed evidence comes from the region around Rome and Campania,¹ it is clear that market gardens played a significant role in the environs of most major Greco-Roman town or cities (Osborne, 1992; Frass, 2006, 357–70). Our Roman sources laud not only the garden produce of Latin towns such as Ostia, Aricia, Amiternum, Nursia, Tibur, Tusculum, and Praeneste, and the Campanian towns of Capua, Cumae, Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Signia, but also Ravenna or Teate Marrucorum, modern Chieti, for example (Str. 5.3.12; Plin. *Nat.* 19.77, 81, 107, 140, 151; Col. *R* 10.129–40), and, as we will note briefly below, they readily acknowledge the wide range of fine produce developed by Greek and Near Eastern market gardeners.

As Pliny (*Nat.* 19.52) points out, vegetables were extremely cheap in Roman Italy, as they would continue to be throughout the empire as late as Diocletian's price edict, and the cultivation of fresh fruits and vegetables was carried out wherever possible. The excavations of Pompeii show that 17.7% of the excavated space in the town was dedicated to gardens or cultivation (Jashemski, 1979b, 1:24) – vineyards, market gardens, as well as domestic gardens in houses and the courtyards of apartment buildings, often planted with ornamental plants, but frequently interspersed with vines, fruit trees, and vegetables (Jashemski, 1974, 1979a, 1979b, 1:15–24 and *passim*; Tchernia, 1986, 227–9). Many houses in Pompeii deprived of their own garden plots were nonetheless furnished with iron agricultural or gardening tools (Kolendo, 1985), which would tend to suggest that more than a few urban dwellers also owned small plots outside of the city, which they cultivated as market gardens, and/or for inexpensive fresh vegetables for their own consumption, as is still common in modern Campania, for example. The same phenomenon was common in Rome, where vineyards lined the *agger* from the Esquiline to the Colline Gate (Wiseman, 1998, 16), the densely packed *insulae* of the city and its suburbs were interspersed with *horti* (Frass, 2006, 5–43, 425–53), many of which, even the most luxurious, served as lucrative market gardens or farms (see, e.g., Frass, 2006, 229–31), and even the poorest of the plebs, who could not afford a garden of their own, grew vegetables and pot herbs in planters in their windows (Linderski, 2001).

Many different varieties of vegetables are explicitly attested by our literary sources (André, 1981, 15–22; Garcia Soler, 2001, 43–72; Amigues, 2005; Frass, 2006, 132–6; Amigues, 2007). Many common garden vegetables were available in a wide range of varieties, and Romans were very conscious of different regional specialties. For example, in addition to distinguishing between red and white onions, Pliny lists 18 distinct varieties (*Nat.* 19.68; 76), many of Greek origin, as so often with most garden vegetables, but also including onions from Egypt, Cyprus, Sardis, Africa, Gaul, and, a particularly prized variety, from Ascalon in Judaea (Plin. *Nat.* 19.101–7). Every attempt was made to improve the quality of vegetables, just as we have seen with fruit, with Pliny noting that kale was grown too large to fit on a table, or cultivated asparagus from Ravenna weighed a third of a Roman pound (Plin. *Nat.* 19.54). The Romans put great emphasis upon ensuring proper drainage and tith in their gardens, with thorough soil preparation through deep tillage with plough or mattock, the use of crushed terracotta at the appropriate depth to facilitate drainage, and addition of clay or gravel to adjust moisture (Farrar, 1998, 170). As Jashemski was able to confirm through excavation of gardens at Pompeii, the soil was contoured into a system of ridges, called *sulci*, and depressions to facilitate irrigation and drainage and to reduce the amount of weeding required (Jashemski, 1979a, 405–6). Similar contours are found constantly in Pompeian gardens (see Jashemski, 1979b, *passim*). Less well known, perhaps, and arguably even more indicative of the extent of the market, the Romans developed greenhouses, first of selenite, and later, as Martial notes (8.14, 8.68), of double-glazed glass, some heated with hot water, in order to force the growth of vegetables and flowers in the off-season. One of the more elaborate was the *specularium*, known only by chance because it was fashioned for the emperor Tiberius, a small portable greenhouse fitted on wheels, so it could be moved in and out of the sun, in which cucumbers or melons could be forced in a soil rich in rotted manure (Webber, 1972, 19; Farrar, 1998, 166–74). In addition to exploiting greenhouses to grow vegetables out of season, Roman gardeners could draw on a large range of vegetable species and cultivars, which they could plant from February through November, yielding produce for most of the year (Plin. *Nat.* 19.83, 89, 90, 125, 132–3, 137). Finally, a number of excavations suggest that plants, presumably trees and delicate ornamentals for the most part, but also some vegetables, which benefitted from being transplanted (e.g. cabbage, see Plin. *Nat.* 19.138), were grown in nurseries and then bedded out, perhaps even traded and sold, in pots, normally purpose made perforated terracotta pots or *ollae*, or in amphoras that had been broken and perforated (Jashemski, 1974, 399–400, 1979a, 406–7, 1979b, 284–5, 293–6; Macaulay-Lewis, 2006).

The heavy fertilizer needs of these vegetable gardens was facilitated by heavy composting and manuring, and access to nightsoil from nearby urban markets (Col. *R* 10.81–5; Pöhlmann, 1884, 129–30; Hodge, 1992, 336–7), but

irrigation was also critical, and required a more complex infrastructure (Kron, 2012, 167–8). Studies of the arid island of Delos, largely abandoned to agriculture in the Medieval and Modern eras, but a highly developed ancient center of flower and market gardening, using extremely careful management of its water resources (Brunet, 2008), helps illustrate the still underappreciated Greek achievement (Osborne, 1992; cf. Foxhall, 2007a, 69–72). The Romans' unrivalled system of aqueducts was largely dedicated to urban needs, but water was granted to market gardeners to water their crops for a small fee (Beltrán Lloris, 2006, 171, n. 84; Coates-Stephens, 2003), and an impressive network of cisterns and private rural aqueducts is now increasingly well attested in the suburbs of Rome (Wilson, 1999, 2009b), and has recently been uncovered in Lucania, Tunisia, Libya (Gualtieri, 2008), and Spain (Prieto, 2008, 82). An elaborate system to automatically and economically irrigate the Piazza d'Oro garden at Hadrian's villa using capillary action illustrates the sophistication and imagination of Roman irrigation (Jashemski & Ricotti, 1992, 588–93).

The profitability and viability of Roman market gardening, which concentrated primarily on selling vegetables for a broad market, was likely enhanced by a vigorous luxury trade in ornamentals, as well as flowers for decoration, garlands, and perfume, a trade that existed not just in large cities, but even in relatively small towns such as Delos, Paestum, and Pompeii (Jashemski, 1979a, 1979b, 267–78; Brun, 2000). In fact, as Pliny pointed out, Campania produced more perfume than many regions produced olive oil (Brun, 2004b, 13). By way of comparison, it is worth noting that large-scale production of fresh flowers for the market did not take off in London until the end of the nineteenth century (Webber, 1972, 63–4).

FURTHER READING

I offer much fuller bibliographical references to recent work on ancient agriculture in the more complete online version of Kron (2012), but can recommend White (1970), Kolendo (1980), Flach (1990), and Marcone (1997) for reliable overviews of Roman farming. Peters (1998) offers a superb analysis of Roman animal husbandry, focusing primarily on the German zooarchaeological evidence, which can be supplemented for Italy by MacKinnon (2004). Rinkewitz (1984) gives the most comprehensive study of Roman game farming, and we now have excellent recent monographs on Roman fishing by Sahrhage (2002) and on fish farming by Marzano (2013c). Billiard (1913) is a classic account of Roman wine-making by an expert in French viticulture of the late nineteenth century, but the definitive analysis of Roman wine and olive oil production, based on extensive archaeological research, is provided by Brun (2004b), with Brun (2005) concentrating on

Roman Gaul. Roman arable farming is well served by Spurr (1986). Roman market gardening calls out for further study, but Farrar (1998) provides a good foundation.

A comprehensive, sound, and up-to-date monograph on Greek agriculture is still very much needed, although Amouretti (1986) is good on the Mediterranean triad, and particularly wheat and barley production, and Brun (2004a) is outstanding on wine and olive oil production. Comprehensive studies of Greek animal husbandry are still wanting as well, although Magerstedt (1859) is excellent on the literary sources, and Chandezon (2003) and Howe (2008) offer convincing evidence for the importance of livestock, with Chandezon (2004) and Kron (2002) surveying the still limited archaeozoological evidence for the increased size of Greek as well as Roman cattle.

NOTE

- 1 See, e.g., Col. *R* 10.129–40 for some of the locations in Italy distinguished for the vegetables they grow, with a heavy emphasis on Campania. For villas and farms excavated near Pompeii, see Day (1932); Carrington (1931); and for bibliography on recent surveys, see Patterson (2006). For an analysis of the major market towns of Campania, see Frayn (1993) 73–100.

CHAPTER 16

Storage and Transport

Robert I. Curtis

Aelius Aristides, the second-century AD Greek rhetorician, declares in his encomium to Rome (*Or.* 26. 11) that so many merchant vessels arrive in the city that it is virtually “the earth’s warehouse.” His statement is hardly exaggerated, since Rome indeed received vast quantities of merchandise from all over the empire, much of which included food. The population of Rome by the second century AD exceeded one million people for whom the Roman government, in the interest of political and social stability, oversaw the food supply not just for the 200 000 or so who received free grain (*frumentationes*) but for everyone.¹ It has been estimated that the supply of just grain, wine, and olive oil, the basic components of the Mediterranean diet, exceeded 400 000 metric tons, including over 100 million liters of wine, brought annually to Rome in over 1692 ships (Mattingly & Aldrete, 2000; Paolucci, 2010, 167). The number of ships on any particular day during peak season from May to October can be judged from the statement of Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.18) that in AD 62 a storm destroyed 200 ships anchored in the harbor. Other food items imported to Rome included fresh and processed fish, vegetables, meat, cheese, honey, spices, fruits, and nuts (Loane, 1938, 13–33). Rome even had specialty markets devoted to the storage or sale of food, such as the *Forum Cuppedinis* (delicacies) and *Forum Piscarium* (fish), both perhaps alternate names for the general food market, or *macellum*, the *Portus Olearius* (olive oil), the *Forum Holitorium* (vegetables), the *Forum Vinarium* (wine), and two areas for meat, the *Forum Suarium* (pigs) and perhaps the *Forum Boarium* (cattle) (Panciera, 1980; Richardson, 1992, 162–79). This volume of food required large public and private storage facilities both in the port cities and in Rome itself (Rickman, 1971, 15–122; Richardson, 1992, 192–5). To ensure a steady and dependable supply of food the Roman government created a vast bureaucracy under the watchful eye of the *praefectus annonae* to ensure its import, storage, and distribution (Rickman, 1980; Sirks, 1991; Robinson, 1992).

Concomitant with the importation of food to Rome was the exportation of those items from Italy and regions located throughout the Roman Empire. Recent studies have argued that in the first two centuries AD increased Roman long-distance trade, monetization of market exchanges, and sensitivity of prices to shifts in the economic environment indicate the operation of a true market economy composed of a series of interconnected and interdependent regional markets (Fulford, 1987; Temin, 2001, 2006; Mattingly, 2006). Some areas specialized in particular foods and acquired a certain renown and financial success for their products, such as olive oil from Spain and North

Africa and wine from Gaul. Lacking a merchant marine, the Roman government contracted out the city's food supply to private shippers and merchants. Consequently, private traders or formal trade organizations (*societates*), working for the state or on their own, shipped food not only to the capital but also between local and regional markets. A. Herennuleius Cestus boasted on his tombstone that he was not only a wine merchant (*negotiator vinarius*) but also "a merchant of every kind of transmarine products" (*mercator omnis generis mercium transmarinarum*). Italian traders apparently carried Campanian wine and hibernating land snails (*Helix pomatia*) to Egypt even during the winter season. C. Sentius Regulianus, a dealer from Lugdunum in Gaul, not only traded in Gallic wine but was also an office holder (*curator*) of a *societas* importing oil from Spain. Finally, fish-sauce merchants (*negotiatores allecarii*) operating between Britain and the Atlantic coasts of Gaul and Germania Superior probably also formed a *societas*.² With so many merchants engaged in long-distance trade of a wide variety of food products in various forms, some with particular handling needs and others with a relatively short shelf-life, storage facilities and modes of transportation were, no doubt, problems of great concern.

Storage

Storage occupies the middle step between production or processing of food and its distribution, sale, and consumption. The farmer or villa owner, for example, might keep grain in excess of the consumption needs of the *familia* to have seed for the following year's planting, to guard against subsequent bad or delayed harvests, or to await a better price on the market (cf. Cato Agr. 3.2). The military might store food for up to a year or more (cf. Tac. Ag. 22.2), urban dwellers stored food at home in storerooms and pantries, and food-shop owners maintained an inventory of foods for sale (MacMahon, 2005, 81–2). Food destined for overseas markets might be stored both at ports of embarkation and debarkation, and, perhaps, at intermediary ports along the way (Haggis, 1996). How food is stored must take into consideration the quantity of food needing storage, length of time necessary for storage before it is moved, environmental conditions under which food is stored, and available technology to meet the requirements of particular foods. The item for which storage facilities and mechanisms are best known is grain.

Although some indigenous populations in the provinces stored grain in underground pits, silos, and caves, Romans preferred above-ground storage, particularly in areas, such as Italy, that had wet climates (Curtis, 2001, 327). Grain requires a dark, dry, cool, and confined but well-ventilated space to prevent respiration of the grain that leads to spoilage through premature germination and attack by molds and fungi, and to exclude pests, such as rats and weevils.³ Several different grain pests and mold, for example, infested a cargo of dehusked emmer wheat found in the hold of a late second-century

AD ship near the Roman fort of Laurium in the Netherlands. Archaeologists hypothesize that the grain had been stored in a wooden granary building for at least a year before being shipped from northern Gaul (Pals & Hakbijl, 1992). The characteristic rural granary, such as found in Italy at Vicovaro in Latium, was most often made of wood and raised on supports.⁴ The most revealing archaeological evidence for grain storage, however, are the remains of large warehouses (*horrea*) found in military camps and port cities.

Horrea held various kinds of food, but their architectural design especially accommodated grain storage.⁵ Military stone-built *horrea* began replacing earlier wooden structures by the second century AD. Rectangular in shape and usually about 20 feet wide, they stood on high ground within the fort near the commander's residence. Walls, constructed of squared stones, received buttresses at intervals on the exterior; narrow vents inserted between buttresses near ground level provided subfloor ventilation and kept pests out. Stone pillars or dwarf walls supported a wooden floor (Figure 16.1); the roof, also made of wood and covered with tiles, overhung the walls to provide cool shade and to allow water to run off at a distance from the building. Access was restricted to doors placed at one or both ends. How grain was stored inside the *horreum* remains uncertain, but was probably in loose form in bins or, most likely, in individual sacks or baskets (Johnson, 1983, 142–57; Curtis, 2001, 329–33 and Figure 23).



Figure 16.1 Granary. Roman Fort at Housesteads in Britain. Second century AD.

Photo © R. Curtis.

Rome possessed nearly 300 warehouses, large and small, known primarily

from literary and epigraphic sources. Identification of warehouses by name, such as *Horrea Lolliana*, implies structures built on land once owned by private citizens, and, even after *horrea* had come under imperial ownership, they apparently also provided private retail space.⁶ Many warehouses lay along the Tiber River or roads leading from the river toward the Forum, especially in the area called the *Emporium* in the Aventine District, where today stands Monte Testaccio, a hill formed by the broken remains primarily of oil amphorae from Spain (Rickman, 1971, 87–122). Unfortunately, little remains of the city's warehouses beyond names and plans. *Horrea* in Rome's ports, however, exhibit the same pattern as those built in the capital, being located near the Tiber or along major roads and consisting of buildings that display rows of deep narrow rooms that faced onto a corridor or a square or rectangular courtyard. Thick walls, only occasionally supported with buttresses, and few windows and doors restricted access and kept the interior cool and dark. Examples at Portus exhibit a central wall serving as the back wall of rooms opening out in opposite directions.⁷

Wine and oil had storage requirements different from those for grain. Following pressing of grapes and olives the extracted liquids underwent further processing and storage in storerooms, or *cellae* (Thurmond, 2006, 108–10, 136–45). In both cases the storage vessel was the dolium. The dolium, like the Greek *pithos*, was a terracotta vessel designed for bulk storage. Possessing a wide mouth and large-diameter belly, it lacked a neck and handles. Either globular or cylindrical in shape with flat or round bottom, capacities varied widely between an estimated 212 liters to over 1800 liters. To prevent absorption into the clay, the interior was lined with pine pitch or wax. Round, flat lids (*opercula*) provided airtight seals. Dolia, being large and essentially immobile, represented a significant financial investment to be used and reused for a significant number of years. Consequently, when cracked, they were mended with lead rather than discarded (Brenni, 1985, 11–14, 3–34; Peña, 2007, 46–7). Wine dolia, such as the 18 partially buried vessels (*dolia defossa*) that made up the *cella vinaria* of the farm house (Villa Regina) at Boscoreale, needed a well-ventilated space to keep the wine cool; oil dolia, on the other hand, sat on the ground in storehouses constructed for warmth so the oil would not become turbid. *Cellae vinariae* could be modest in size, as in the Villa Regina, but also quite large, as in the Villa Pisanella, also in Boscoreale, that held 84 dolia (Brenni, 1985, 46; Ciarallo, 2009).

Other foods received storage as well. So, for example, Varro (*R* 2.2) mentions that a villa might possess a particular room for storing fruit (*oporothea*), and cured meat, such as pork, was hung in a special storeroom (*carnarium*) until needed (Cato *Agr.* 162.3; Columella 12.55.3). In Herculaneum, dolia in food shops held grain, chickpeas, broad beans, and other vegetables (MacMahon, 2005, 82), and peppercorns were stored in dolia in Berenike (Wendrich *et al.*, 2003, 80). On the farm, in addition to cereals, legumes, such as lentils,

chickpeas, bitter vetch, broad beans, and garden peas, could be stored loose in separate bins within granaries (Col. 1.6.13) or placed in dolia or in reused amphorae (Varro in Plin. *Nat.* 18.307–8). Barrels were reused in the legionary *horreum* at Vindonissa (Switzerland) to store pomegranates, cereals, and nuts (Jacomet *et al.*, 2002). Finds in Switzerland of pomegranates, a strictly Mediterranean fruit, raises the question of how they and other food items were transported.

Transport

Roman agricultural writers offer advice on how to store foods but say little on their movement to market beyond recommending that estates lie near urban centers or near roads or navigable rivers that lead to local markets (Cato *Agr.* 1.4; Var. *R* 1.16.6; Forbes & Foxhall, 1995). For long-distance trade, access to port facilities and ships would also be a consideration, and movement to a port would probably initially require travel by road or river. Consequently, all three methods of transportation – road, river, and sea – complemented each other, since merchandise might travel by one, two, or even all three modes in moving from place of production to final destination. Roman land transport costs exceeded those of canal, river, or sea transport, but legal texts highlighting Roman concerns with leasing vehicles, animals (especially mules), and muleteers for transporting agricultural produce nevertheless imply a strong reliance on this mode of conveyance (Martin, 1990). Recent studies have shown that the ratio of Roman land and water transportation costs was not out of line with that experienced in eighteenth-century Britain, which effectively utilized an integrated system of all three modes of commercial transportation. What mattered was not the relative cost of one means of transport compared to another but whether there was a profit to be made by sending goods to market.⁸ Transport involved not just the mode of conveyance by which a product moved but also the container that held the product.

Romans employed two methods of land transport utilizing animals: packsaddles and carts or wagons. Packsaddles strapped on the backs of donkeys or mules are most efficient for off-road travel, but the load capacity per animal is relatively light, perhaps 300 pounds (White, 1984, 128–9; Martin, 1990, 313). Varro (*R* 2.6.5) describes trains of donkeys that carried olive oil, wine, and grain from inland areas of Italy to coastal ports. In the Nile Valley of Egypt the donkey was a popular pack animal for transporting food from farms to ports, but when journeys required movement across the desert the camel played an important role.⁹ Caravans of donkeys and camels, for example, regularly made the trip from the Nile Valley to the quarry settlement at Mons Claudianus in the eastern desert. Excavators have found desiccated remains of a variety of foods that made up shipments, including cereals, pulses, fruits, and nuts. Pigs and chickens were probably imported

live, while fish came mainly from the Red Sea, no doubt also carried by caravans of pack animals. Most containers used on pack animals, such as skins, sacks, or baskets, have not survived, but terracotta vessels found at Mons Claudianus show that olive oil, wine, and processed fish from around the Mediterranean Sea also formed part of caravan cargoes (van der Veen, 1998).

Draft animals yoked to wooden carts and wagons could pull loads much greater in volume and weight than could pack animals. Mules and donkeys, rarely horses, single or double yoked, pulled both two- and four-wheeled vehicles loaded with merchandise, and oxen, though slower, yoked in pairs could move burdens weighing up to several thousand pounds (Raepsaet, 2008). Romans employed a variety of vehicles, such as the two-wheeled *carpentum*, used on farms to move agricultural products, and especially the two- or four-wheeled, open wagon called the *plaustrum* (Raepsaet, 2008; White, 1984, 127–40 and Appendix X). Food containers used in wheeled transport, shown in paintings or sculpted reliefs, include the wineskin (*culleus*) made of ox-hide and, particularly in northern European provinces, wooden barrels for transporting wine, beer, or, perhaps, fish sauce. Sacks, baskets, and terracotta vessels could also be loaded onto wagons and carts (Marlière, 2002; Raepsaet, 2008, 591, Figure 23.3; Wilson, 2009a, 216; Paolucci, 2010, 168 and Figure 6).

Water transport permitted large cargoes to be conveyed longer distances, in a much shorter time, at less cost than did land transport.¹⁰ Roman sea-going merchant ships came in a range of sizes and capacities. Most were of medium size, with an estimated burden of between 60 and 150 tons; larger ones, some over 400 tons, did exist, but they were not the norm. The latter ships were most often associated with late-Republican commerce in Italian wine with Gaul, the *annona*, and the marble trade.¹¹ Whereas large ships could travel open waters, medium and small ships most often used cabotage to move cargoes from port to port.¹²

Ports were busy places, with large ships either standing offshore transferring their cargoes onto smaller service ships, or, assisted by tugboats, entering the harbor and being conducted to a dockside berth. Other ships, loaded with cargoes, sailed out toward their destinations. Numerous workers assisted in loading and offloading cargoes, such as operators of service craft (*codicarii*), grain measurers (*mensores*), sack carriers (*saccarii*), and warehouse workers (*horrearii*), among others, many organized into corporations (Loane, 1938, 14, n. 13; Casson, 1965; Mattingly & Aldrete, 2000). Administrators documented the arrival and departure of cargoes, paying particular attention to the security and quality of food products. So, for example, grain merchants were required to have available for inspection a sealed leather bag containing a sample of the cargo in the ship's hold; for wine shipments a sealed bottle was necessary (Rickman, 1980, 262, Figure 5; Parker, 1992b, 94; Rickman,

1998, 319; Kessler & Temin, 2007, 325; Morais, 2010, 27). The Sarno Lararium painting depicts dockside activity in Pompeii, where workers weigh sacks, perhaps filled with vegetables (Frölich, 1991, 262–3), while a mosaic from Ostia shows porters (*phalangarii*) transferring amphorae from a sea-going ship to a river craft (Figure 16.2).



Figure 16.2 Mosaic. Dock workers transferring amphora from merchant ship to river craft. Ostia. Second century AD.

Photo © R. Curtis.

Although some transport ships carried primarily a single cargo, such as grain or olive oil, products primarily connected with the *annona*, most ships carried mixed cargoes, loaded at point of embarkation or acquired at intermediate stops en route to the final destination (Houston, 1988, 557–8). This is implied in inscriptions that identify shippers specializing in more than one product, such as Tiberius Claudius Docimus, the imperial freedman who dealt in both salt-fish and wine from Africa (*CIL* 6.9676), but is seen most clearly in cargoes of shipwrecks. Some wrecks held food cargoes probably stored in baskets and sacks, such as hazelnuts discovered in the La Tradelière wreck (Parker, 1992a). Other foods in the same cargo, wine and possibly fish sauce, were contained in amphorae, the standard Roman transport container.¹³ These containers vary in size and shape but share certain common characteristics. Made of terracotta, they possess two handles and a pointed toe for ease of handling by one person (Figure 16.2). Amphorae were stowed in the ship's hold upright in interlocking layers with toes of the lowest layer set in a bed of sand.¹⁴ Amphorae were either broken and discarded after decantation or reused for other food products or for unrelated purposes (Peña, 2007, 61–192; Wilson, 2009a, 232–33). In addition to shipwrecks, amphorae have been

found on land in port facilities, urban areas, rural villas, and military camps. Since food in liquid or solid form is a highly perishable commodity, the durable amphora can be viewed as a proxy for studying trade in foodstuffs. Amphora specialists, for example, have in some cases been able to associate particular amphora shapes and clay fabrics with specific contents and place of origin and so reveal many details of Roman long-distance trade, such as trade routes.¹⁵

Some shipwrecks contain amphorae that still retain all or some of their original contents that are readily identifiable. This piece of luck stems from the fact that amphorae when filled were stoppered with some sort of seal, such as a lid (*operculum*) or a plug made of cork, clay, or wood.¹⁶ Other amphorae bear a painted label (*titulus pictus*) or lead tag (*pittacium*) that provides various types of information, such as vessel contents, names of producers and shippers, and, for some products such as fish sauce and wine, quality designations and advertising schemes.¹⁷ For other containers, scientists can identify organic residues adhering to the interior walls through specialized scientific techniques, such as gas–liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry (Formenti & Duthel, 1996). Foods identified by actual contents or amphora labels include fish (mackerel, sardines, tuna, anchovies), fish sauce (*garum*, *liquamen*, *allex*, *muria*), meat (salted or smoked pork), fruits (figs, dates, peaches, plums, cherries), honey, nuts (hazelnut, chestnut, almond, pistachio), olives, olive oil, vinegar, wine, grapes, and grape stalks.¹⁸ Some products, when bottled, contained an added preservative for the long journey. So, for example, wine might have sea water or chalk added, and olives were often packed in grape products, such as *passum*, *defrutum*, or vinegar (Sealey & Tyers, 1989; Paolucci, 2010).

The basic storage container, the dolium, unexpectedly appears as a transport container as well. Underwater archaeologists have discovered ten ships that had sunk between southern Gaul and the west coast of Italy that, when originally constructed, had been equipped with dolia of various sizes permanently fixed in their hold near midship.¹⁹ Dolia stamps link them to the Pirani, a pottery-making family in the wine-producing area of Minturnae near Rome. Scholars have drawn a connection between these dolia ships and dolia warehouses found in Italy at Ostia and in southern Gaul at Massilia and Lyons, and postulate that they represent a thriving wine trade between these areas from the Augustan period to the second century AD (Brenni, 1985, 50–6; Hesnard, 1995, 1997; Marlière, 2002). The advantage of dolia is their bulk capacity, while occupying less space in the hold than do amphorae. Nevertheless, dolia ships usually contained amphorae as well in the fore and aft areas. The relatively short flourishing of dolia ships probably resulted from the instability imparted to them when one or more vessels ruptured.

The last major transport container was the wooden barrel (*cupa*). Of either Gallic or north Etruscan origin, they were in commercial use by the first

century BC, perhaps for transporting beer within Gaul and Germany. Traces of tartaric acid found in the walls of extant examples from the Roman military camp at Oberaden indicate that they frequently held wine (Desbat, 1997; Tchernia, 1997b; Marlière, 2002; Nelson, 2005, 46–66). Barrels no doubt continued to be used for beer and, most likely, processed fish products. Beer merchants (*negotiatores cervesarii*), for example, plied their trade in central and northern Europe, and fish salteries in Armorica in western Gaul, apparently lacking kilns for making amphorae, most likely used barrels to transport their products. Both commodities were traded in northern Europe and Britain, where the army constituted a prime market (Immerzeel, 1990; Curtis, 2001, 370–1; Wilson, 2009a, 234–7). Barrels were leak-proof, easy to move by rolling, less difficult to stow and sturdier than amphorae, and, like those found at Xanten, capable of holding over 1400 liters each (Desbat, 1997, 115; Marlière, 2002, Figures 172, 177; Twede, 2005). Barrels did not totally replace amphorae, even in Europe, as the two were used side by side (Panella & Tchernia, 2002, 184). The frequent appearance of barrels on stone reliefs indicates their extensive use on the rivers of Europe (Marlière, 2002). A relief from Neumagen in the Netherlands, for example, shows a Roman warship engaged in transporting barrels on the Rhine River (Figure 16.3).



Figure 16.3 Stone relief. Transporting wine barrels by ship. Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, Germany.

Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

Small ships, boats, barges, and rafts, powered by oars and sails or pulled by animals, plied rivers and canals carrying food cargoes between coastal ports and inland markets, civilian and military. Ships laden with wine, fish sauce, oil, and other products entered large ports, such as Lyons and Fos, where merchandise was often transvased into barrels or locally made amphorae and shipped inland and across the Channel to Britain (Fulford, 1991; Tchernia, 1997b, 124–5; Schmitt, 1998; van Neer, Ervynck, & Monsieur, 2010). A boat, found on a former channel of the Rhine at Woerden in the Netherlands, for example, contained wheat en route north from Belgium (Pals & Hakbijl, 1992). Art historical evidence provides additional examples. At Pompeii, for instance, a lararium painting shows a small boat laden with merchandise being towed along the Sarno River. Small boats (*codicariae*) also carried food and other merchandise up the Tiber River to Rome, an activity reflected in a painting from Ostia, where sack-carriers load probably grain aboard a river craft bound for the capital (Casson, 1965, 36–7 and Plates II.2; Ellmers, 1978; Frölich, 1991, 262–3 and Taf. 6; Boetto, 2011).

For centuries private shippers and traders, for the most part dependably, provided Romans throughout the Empire with a variety of foods, some coming from distant lands, conveyed along networks of roads and waterways in multiple types of container, such as skins, sacks, amphorae, barrels, and sometimes dolia. Some of this merchandise came from inland areas that utilized pack animals, wagons, or riverboats to move food to local markets or to coastal ports for sea transport. Merchant ships carried food across the seas, where again land and river transport conveyed these commodities to inland markets. Facilities for short- and long-term storage placed along land, river, and sea routes facilitated the movement of food and ensured the maintenance of a reliable supply.

FURTHER READING

Ancient writers, such as satirists, culinary authors, and physicians, usually in passing comments, frequently identify what products were imported and exported. They have little to say, however, on the practical aspects of food storage facilities and transport containers. The agricultural writers Cato, Varro, Columella, and Palladius, and the encyclopedist Pliny the Elder, however, treat these matters in detail as they relate to farms and villas. Legal sources, such as those discussed by Martin (1990), provide additional information. Archaeological, art historical, and epigraphic evidence afford the best information on large-scale, medium- to long-term storage and long-distance transportation of foodstuffs, especially containers.

Curtis (2001) treats ancient food processing and storage generally, while Thurmond (2006) focuses on the Roman period; both provide full documentation. For a detailed discussion on the technology of Greco-Roman

food storage, see Curtis (2015). The standard treatment of Roman grain storage remains that of Rickman (1971). Robinson presents a clear overview of the food supply system for the city of Rome; details can be sought in the works of Rickman (1980) and Sirks (1991). Casson (1965) and Mattingly & Aldrete (2000) describe a lively picture of dockside activity in ports.

Although Casson's (1971) treatment of ancient ships remains standard, the *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* frequently publishes articles on Roman ships, shipwrecks, and long-distance trade. The best compilation of ancient shipwrecks and their cargoes up to AD 1500 is that by Parker (1992a). Literature on Roman transport amphorae is extensive, but Peacock & Williams (1986), augmented by Martin-Kilcher (2004), provide an excellent, brief discussion and classification of the various types; Peña (2007) considers their uses and reuses. A detailed study of dolia remains a significant desideratum. Until then, one can profitably consult Brenni (1985). Élise Marlière (2002) discusses skins and barrels as transport containers, while Twede (2002, 2005) offers informative views on amphorae and barrels as commercial packaging.

NOTES

- 1 In the third century AD Septimius Severus added olive oil to the dole; Aurelian added pork and wine (Mattingly & Aldrete, 2000, 146).
- 2 *CIL* 9.4680 (Cestus); Panciera, 1980 (Regulianus); Immerzeel, 1990 (*negotiatores allecarii*); Marzano, 2011 (snails).
- 3 Properly stored, grain can remain edible for several years. Plin. *Nat.* 18.73; Curtis, 2001, 325–8; Thurmond, 2006, 23–9.
- 4 Rossiter, 1978, 57–9. Columella (1.6.9–10) discusses multi-storied farm buildings that stored liquid products, such as oil and wine, on the ground floor and grain and other dry products on an upper floor ventilated by small windows.
- 5 Porphyryon, scholist on Horace *Carm.* 3.12.18 (Holder & Keller, 1884, 156), states “Moreover, today the warehouse of Galba is filled with wine and oil and other similar things.” Small warehouses called *cellae* apparently specialized in wine (Richardson, 1992, 191–2). See also Rickman, 1971, 171; Rickman, 2002, 361–2.
- 6 Rickman, 1971, 108–21, 173–6, 1980, 236–8; Métraux, 1998, 15; Rickman, 1998, 323; *CIL* 6.9801 (female fish vendor in the *Horrea Galbae*).
- 7 Hermansen, 1981, 227–37; Curtis, 2001, 334–5; Rickman, 2002. Granaries at Karanis, a port city on the Nile River in the Fayum district of Egypt,

- possessed characteristics similar to those in Ostia, with the addition of underground facilities and some open bins suitable for the dry Egyptian climate (Husselman, 1952).
- 8 Varro *R* 1.16.2–6; Martin, 1990; Laurence, 1999, 95–108; Raepsaet, 2008, 601. See also note 10 below.
 - 9 Known in Pharonic times, use of camels became widespread only in the Roman period. Wooden carts and wagons, though sometimes used, did not function well in the Egyptian landscape. Bagnall, 1985; Adams, 2007, 49–58.
 - 10 A recent estimate shows that the expense of transport by wagon exceeded that by sea by a ratio of about 50 to 1. In addition, it has also been estimated that it would take 375 wagons with a 400 kg capacity each to equal one shipload with an average capacity of 150 tons. Morais, 2010, 23.
 - 11 Houston, 1988; Parker, 1992a; Rathbone, 2003, 198–201; Wilson, 2009a, 227–8. No archaeological evidence exists for ships the size of the *Syracusia* (Ath. 206d–209e), estimated at 4200 tons, and *Isis* (Lucian *Nav.* 5), at 1300 tons. Turfa & Steinmayer, 1999.
 - 12 Houston, 1988, 560; Morais, 2010, 24. That large ships often plied deep seas may explain their near total absence from the archaeological record. Cf. Wilson, 2009a, 227–9.
 - 13 Food containers often shared the ship’s hold with non-food items, such as pottery and lead ingots (Parker, 1992a).
 - 14 Parker, 1992b; Twede, 2002. Mosaics of transport ships show amphorae on deck, though this may be more artistic license than reality (Blázquez Martínez, García-Gelabert, & López Monteagudo, 1991).
 - 15 Studies on amphorae and long-distance trade are too numerous to cite *in extenso*. Cf. Martin-Kilcher, 1987 – 1994; Curtis, 1988; Meijer, 2002; Martin, 2008.
 - 16 Twede, 2002, 184–5. Some amphora contents, such as wine and fish sauce, are suggested by the appearance of a lining of pitch on the interior of the vessel. Cf. Curtis, 1991, 44; Dorrego, Carrera, & Luxán, 2004; Peña, 2007, 67–9.
 - 17 For *tituli picti*, see Curtis, 1984 –1986; Liou, 1987; Rodríguez Almeida, 1989; Peña, 2007, 99–114; Varone, 2010, 222. For the *pittacium*, see Petron. *Sat.* 34 and Lequément, 1976.
 - 18 Berthault, 1989; Peña, 2007, 73; Wilson, 2009a, 232, n. 36. Grain was, most likely, carried in sacks or loose in the hold of a ship (Parker, 1992a,

375; Pals & Hakbijl, 1992; Wilson, 2009a, 228). Pliny (*Nat.* 19.142) hints that reused oil amphorae sometimes carried cabbages. For a summary of nearly 1200 ancient wrecks and their cargoes, see Parker (1992a).

19 Marlière (2002, 170) lists the wrecks by name and where found.

CHAPTER 17

Supplying Cities

Paul Erdkamp

“Not Solely an Act of God”

At the time of writing, August 2011, the Horn of Africa is in the grips of famine as a result of prolonged drought in the region. In a speech given on August 11, 2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked that “a hunger crisis is not solely an act of God,” but that also governance, education, infrastructure, and agricultural practices come into play.¹ Keeping God – or, in ancient parlance, the Gods – out of it, one can say that food shortage is not so much a result of adverse climatic or ecological conditions, but rather of man-made circumstances that constrain people in dealing with adversity. We will address the urban food supply primarily from the viewpoint of its vulnerability to disruption and the ability to deal with circumstances that threatened the ancient towns’ and cities’ provisioning with food. The main questions are to what extent commercial, social, and political conditions determined the performance of various actors in urban food supply and to what extent these conditions changed over time.

Ecological and Logistical Constraints

Although rural dwellers and urban people basically ate the same kinds of foodstuff, the diet of most people living in larger towns and cities differed from that of people living in the countryside. The main reason for this difference has to be sought in the logistics of the food supply. For most rural dwellers the connection between production and consumption of food was fairly simple: they ate what they (or their close kin) had harvested, gathered, or collected from the near vicinity. They had access to a range of foodstuffs, which may have varied with the seasons, such as chestnuts and apples supplementing dwindling grain reserves in winter. However, the food supply of large coastal cities, which often imported food from overseas regions, was much more complex: food stuffs were collected by merchants (or collectors of rents and taxes) at the farms and brought by pack animals or wagons to the nearest harbor, where it was stored until it was loaded onto ships, which brought them to other harbors, where they were kept in depots, until the food was distributed to traders (or administrators), who sold it to consumers (or handed it out as rations or allowance). Loading, transporting, and storing food stuffs involved huge costs in the form of labor and losses. Obviously, considerations of storage and transportation were more important in

determining the diet of urban inhabitants than that of country dwellers. Hence, it is particular in the case of urban food supply that the costs of distribution favored those products that could be stored and transported with the least costs. Grain meets these criteria more than other crops, as it is quite hardy and contains more calories in relation to bulk than most other foodstuffs. To be sure, the transportation of grain was still quite costly, and a significant part was still lost due to moisture, insects, fungi, thieving, and so on, but the costs and losses were much lower than they were regarding other food stuffs. Wine and olive oil, the two other staple foods of the urban Mediterranean diet, were also relatively easily stored and distributed, and so were food items such as dried beans or garum (salty fish sauce sold in jars). On the other hand, fresh vegetables, fruits, fowl, eggs, and fresh fish were unsuited to long-distance transportation and long-term storage and were thus produced close to the urban markets. Such food stuffs mostly reached the dinner tables of the well-to-do, and not so much those of the poor city dwellers. Hence, the diet of urban consumers consisted of a much more limited range of foodstuffs than the rural diet, in particular being dominated by various types of grain. For the poorer segments of urban society, the overreliance on cereals and the lack of dairy products, fruit, and vegetables could even be a nutritional hazard, as it possibly resulted in malnourishment.

In another sense, however, the urban populace could consider itself privileged, as most urban consumers had access to those kinds of wheat that could be made into leavened bread, while rural people more often ate cheaper kinds of grain that could only be eaten in the form of porridge or flat bread. Farmers grew a large variety of cereals and other crops, some of which, such as millet or chickpeas, were more resistant to drought and heat than wheat. For the same reason people in classical Greece cultivated and consumed more barley than wheat, as the latter was less suited to the generally hot and dry climate of Greece. Smallholders relied on their small plots to feed their families, and for them it was crucial to reduce the risk of harvest failure by cultivating a wide range of crops. It was usually the better cereals, suitable for making bread, that were sold on the urban markets. Again, this was in part a question of logistics, as cheaper cereals were less worthwhile to merchants who were confronted with high costs of transportation and storage. In other words, the threshold for exporting cheap cereals was higher than for wheat. In part the difference between urban and rural consumption was due to the relatively higher urban buying power and to the privileges the urban populace had earned simply by being the subjects of the leading families' patronage. It may be seen as a sign of progress that even those inhabitants of the major cities of the Roman world who were not wealthy by any standard came to be used to consuming cereals in the form of bread – albeit of lesser quality than their wealthier neighbors – while most common people even in democratic Athens in the days of Pericles were used to eating porridge and barley cakes.

Autarky and self-sufficiency are presented as ideals in contemporary writings about urban food supply. For many towns this was sheer necessity, as logistical considerations compelled them to find their supplies locally. Transportation over land required very large investments in terms of human and animal energy, which made transporting bulky goods, such as sacks of grain and amphorae of wine and olive oil, over long distances very expensive. Even if technically feasible, the resulting high costs of imported food would have been beyond the means of the average consumer. Local harvest failure and resulting shortages could not change the fact that overland transportation was too costly to allow long-distance provisioning over land. Hence, in Roman times pepper and other spices were transported throughout the known world, but it would have been too costly to transport wheat 200 km over land. In short, most inland towns functioned as small and isolated islands, relying on their hinterlands for their staple foods. In such towns, many people were farmers who cultivated the fields beyond the city walls.

Transportation over longer distances was only possible if the largest part of the voyage was undertaken by waterways. It is no coincidence that large cities such as Alexandria, Carthage, and Antioch were all located close to the coast and downriver from fertile plains. Classical Athens and imperial Rome were exceptional in the sense that their power allowed them to rely heavily on crops grown beyond their immediate hinterland, such as the Black Sea in the case of Athens, and Egypt and northern Africa in the case of Rome. In fact, the ability of the Roman Empire to exploit overseas provinces allowed Rome to grow into the largest city of the ancient world.

Grain was crucial, because it was the major item of the urban diet. As a crop, grain has a tendency to be very unstable, as it is very susceptible to weather conditions. Hence, the result of the annual harvest is very variable and unpredictable. In many parts of the Mediterranean region, lack of rainfall during the growing season and excessive heat threatened the harvest, but also excess rainfall and storms damaged standing crops. It is to be emphasized there is also much regional variation in the annual fluctuation of the crops, as another feature of the Mediterranean lands is their fragmented nature. The high relief of the peninsulas breaks them up into small micro-regions. Hence, if harvests failed, they did not do so everywhere at the same time. While one region was faced with shortage, another may have experienced glut. Consumers could either alleviate such harvest shocks by storing the surpluses from one year into the next, or by moving surpluses from areas experiencing glut to regions facing dearth. Moreover, not only harvest failure, but also disruption of commerce and transportation, for instance as a result of war, could disrupt the urban food supply.

We should not exaggerate the degree to which people tried to ward off shortages by storing food over the years. The fluctuation of the harvests was unpredictable and people could not know when failure would occur. It was

not an attractive option for traders and landowners to keep large stores for possible future shortages, as the costs and risks were high. Moreover, stocks were generally low just before the next harvest. This is reflected in the general depiction of late winter and early spring as a time of rural poverty and hardship. For example, the second-century physician and medical writer Galen (6.620) states that rustics ate acorns and similar substitutes in late winter and spring, while Columella (12.14) says that dried fruit “helps the country folk in time of winter.” Moreover, several sources indicate that the price of grain on the urban market normally went through an annual cycle, with low prices after the harvest, which gradually rose during autumn and winter to reach a peak just before the new crop was harvested (Cicero, 2 *Verr.* 3.214–5; Julian, *Misop.* 369b. See Erdkamp, 2005, 147–55). We should also not exaggerate the degree to which landowners and traders were able to manipulate the market, even though authorities in the Greek and Roman world were prone to blame high prices on the avarice of merchants and landowners. Few actors on the market were powerful enough to corner the market. It was only when shortage, due to local harvest failure or the disruption of imports, put pressure on the market to begin with that the risks in profiteering were low.

If urban markets failed and prices of basic foodstuffs soared, the consequences were inevitably severe. Grain shortages may not always have resulted in widespread starvation and high levels of mortality, although the most vulnerable people, who lived on the edge of subsistence at the best of times, probably died in greater numbers as a result of the harshening of conditions. As in later times, urban dwellers spent the largest part of their buying power on food, especially grain. Ordinary people had few financial reserves, so one can imagine the impact of a doubling or more of grain prices over a prolonged period. Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.38) emphasizes that the people of Rome bought their food from day to day and that hence the city’s food supply was their most pressing concern. Moreover, the income of those urban dwellers who lived from wage labor and manufacture was very insecure and easily disrupted by any disturbance of the economy. A prolonged rise in basic food prices left little buying power for other necessities, let alone any luxuries. Demand for other goods inevitably fell in times of food shortage, and the resulting malaise of the urban economy caused widespread unemployment and lack of income, aggravating the effects of high food prices.

Urban authorities and members of prominent families realized that they had much to lose when high food prices disrupted the social fabric of their communities. Our sources offer several instances of food riots, and we know that they were quite common in cities such as Rome. Hence, the authorities had every incentive to ensure an adequate supply of the urban markets. Against the background of ecological and logistical constraints we will now discuss the responses of traders and authorities to the demands of urban

consumers.

The Greek World

The increasing trade in grain played a vital role in the development of the Greek city-states. When Greece emerged from the Dark Ages in the eighth or seventh century BC, rapid population growth compelled many communities to send out part of their populations to found new cities on fertile lands outside Greece. The spread of the polis along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Sea stimulated overseas trade, and in the sixth century it was no longer necessary to send out surplus population, as states could exchange their export-products such as wine, olive oil, and manufactured goods for grain from such regions as the Black Sea area and Sicily. Most urban communities had easy access to the Mediterranean Sea, and a lively trade in grain was undoubtedly part of Greek society in the Classical era. Nevertheless, we should not forget that most poleis still relied for most of their grain on the production of their own hinterlands. Classical Athens was exceptional in several ways: it was the largest city of the Greek world, whose consumption surpassed the productive capacity of its political territory. No other city depended to such extent as Athens on overseas shipments. Syracuse, another large polis, relied on its fertile hinterland.

It is important, though, to realize that, while few cities depended on imports as structurally as Athens – maybe Corinth and Rhodes should be counted among the cities that needed to import overseas grain every year – the precariousness of local harvests did compel many other towns and cities to look for outside supplies to supplement inadequate local resources. We cannot really chart or measure the flows of grain to Greek states, as, apart from Athens, our evidence is mainly limited to occasional inscriptions honoring benefactors for bringing in grain. One inscription (Rhodes & Osborne, 2003, 96), dating between 330 and 323 BC, provides an indication of the potential (though probably exceptional) scale of such shipments, as it shows that during a time of shortage Cyrene (a region in northern Africa) exported huge quantities of grain to more than 40 states across the Greek mainland and the islands. Athens received approximately one-eighth of the total, about 150 000 Attic *medimnoi*, or, according to one modern estimate, sufficient to feed 120 000 people for three months (Garnsey, 1988, 159–61). It is clear that shipments on such a scale made the difference when warding off starvation in times of crisis.

However, one should also realize that no state could take the arrival of external supplies for granted, as no state sufficiently controlled outside resources. In the days of Pericles, Athens' superiority at sea offered her great advantages in managing grain supplies from the Hellespont and Black Sea region, but after the city's defeat in the Peloponnesian War the city's

authorities had to seek outside supplies by different means. Political and court speeches by Demosthenes and Lysias offer valuable insight into the city's grain supply. These speeches make absolutely clear that the city's food supply was very much part of politics – external and internal. In the days of Demosthenes, ensuring adequate supplies meant good relations with the Bosporan kings: foreign policy, diplomacy, and the grain trade were very much entwined.

In order to explore the internal political aspects of Athens' food supply, we will discuss some of her laws and institutions, focusing on the question of how Athenian lawmakers balanced the interests of consumers and traders. The orations held in front of the juries in the law courts of democratic Athens, which were dominated by common citizens, reflect the paranoia of Athenian consumers and the eagerness of Athenian plaintiffs to score at the cost of the grain dealers. The speaker in Lysias' *Against the Grain Dealers* tells the jurors that conviction of the grain dealers will make grain cheaper, while acquittal will make grain dearer. It was a precarious situation for traders trying to profit from the opportunities that the Athenian food market offered. The Athenians actually realized that overseas merchants might keep away out of fear of being drawn into court. Hence, they decreed special punishment of persons who made baseless accusations against merchants and ship-owners (Demosthenes 58.11). Athens, like many other poleis, tried to attract merchants in grain, olive oil, and other staple foods by offering them honors and privileges, but the main attraction of the city was undoubtedly its large population's stable demand.

One legal case may be highlighted, because of the insight it offers in various aspects of the city's grain supply. An Athenian plaintiff tells us that he offered credit to Greek traders who proposed to sail to Egypt in order to buy grain there and sail either to Rhodes or Athens to sell it on the local market. The plaintiff agreed, but in his oration he emphasized that he insisted on the grain being brought to Athens. The traders agreed to this clause (at least, according to the plaintiff), because the price of grain in Athens at the time was high. However, when one of the traders was underway to Egypt, shipments of grain arrived in Athens from Sicily, causing the price to fall. Hence, the trader who had remained in Athens sent word to Egypt, informing his partner about the lower price. The latter decided to sail to Rhodes and sell his cargo of Egyptian grain there. Now, several aspects of this case are interesting. First, Athens and Rhodes appear as obvious destinations of grain traders, while the occurrence of Egypt and Sicily reflects their prominent role as grain suppliers. Second, traders kept an eye on current market conditions in those cities where they might fetch a good price. Undoubtedly, the traders bringing grain from Sicily were also attracted by the news that grain prices in Athens were high. Third, prices were volatile, as the arrival of shipments might cause prices to drop within a day. Reliable and recent information was vital for grain traders

looking for profitable destinations. Due to these conditions, cities such as Athens, with their large and prosperous populations, frequent connections to the outside world, and busy ports, offering return cargoes and banking facilities, had a big lead on smaller towns when trying to attract foreign traders.

Nonetheless, Athenian policy was not completely geared to offering ideal circumstances to grain merchants. One Athenian law forbade involvement of her citizens or foreigners residing in Athens in transactions that brought grain to any other destination than Athens itself: hence the eagerness of the plaintiff in the above case to bring the grain traders to court, as he might have been accused of breaking the law himself. The law thus diminished the merchants' ability to maximize their profit and curbed their willingness to inject capital into overseas trade. In a similar vein, Athenian lawmakers forbade the export of grain from Attica. Lysias' oration *Against the Grain Dealers* shows that Athenian law prohibited anyone from buying more than 50 *phormoi* of grain. Assuming that a *phormos* approximately equals a *medimnos* (Figueira, 1986, 156–7), the law implied that the cargo of an average grain freighter would have been divided among at least 60 grain merchants, which means that the law imposed small-scale dealings on the grain market of Athens. Moreover, many different officials controlled the workings of the market, for example checking weights and measures. One part of their functioning was to enforce strict limits on the price of bread and barley meal, which were linked to current grain prices on the Athenian market. The authorities did not impose maximum prices on the grain market itself, as they realized that this would only diminish the volume of grain arriving on the market.

To conclude, while it is clear that the authorities sought to improve the workings of the food market, in particular of the grain market, their measures predominantly had in mind the interests of consumers, not those of the businessmen, traders, and merchants involved. Of course, keeping ship owners or merchants happy would contribute to keeping consumers happy. The main limitation on governmental regulation by local authorities was the realization that most towns and cities partly relied on external suppliers to fulfil their needs. Since overseas traders were by nature very mobile, creating obstacles to their activities was not the best way to ensure an adequate supply.

Rome, the Capital of the World

From the mid-republic onwards, Rome did not have the problem that it needed to attract traders to supply the city's food market. As early as the second century BC, Roman authorities used their rule of regions such as Sicily and Africa to ensure an adequate supply of grain to the empire's capital. After Augustus had turned Egypt into a Roman province, the Nile valley soon developed into the capital's major source of grain. However, one should

realize that Egypt, Africa, Sicily, and other regions fulfilled the capital's need of grain largely by means of taxation and rents due on imperial estates. It was not trade so much as taxation that fed the approximately one million inhabitants of imperial Rome.

Ancient Rome is notorious for its “bread and games,” denouncing the corruption of its masses, but in fact feeding a metropolis of this size – the largest city in the western world until it was surpassed by London around 1800 – under the precarious conditions of the pre-industrial era required a high level of state intervention. An important step in this development was the introduction of the grain-dole in 123 BC by the politician Gaius Sempronius Gracchus, as a result of which all male Roman citizens beyond the age of 14 (or possibly 11) had the right to buy 5 modii of grain per month at a subsidized price. Later politicians made the grain-dole free. Rome's first emperor Augustus limited the recipients to 200 000, a figure that is believed to have remained stable during the next centuries. Since 5 modii of grain per month is more than one person would need, the grain dole would actually have fed more people, possibly 300 000 or even more. In the course of the third century ad, olive oil, pork, and wine were added to the dole.

Rome actually collected far more grain (and other foodstuffs) than it would need for the dole. It is highly likely that part of this grain, after the state's direct needs on behalf of the army, palace, and administration had been fulfilled, was sold to traders catering for the capital's market. Unambiguous figures are lacking, but one might roughly guess that two-thirds of the grain consumed in Rome stemmed from taxes levied in the provinces. The rest was supplied through commercial channels. The volume of the market for wine, fruits, vegetables, beans, meat, fish, and more exotic, luxurious items obviously was enormous, attracting many wealthy businessmen and petty traders.

While acquiring grain was not a problem for the Roman authorities, getting it all in time to Rome was. Supplying a city of one million people was an enormous logistical challenge, for which the state depended on the co-operation of many ship-owners, who were contracted by the administrative office of the *annona*. In order to encourage wealthy citizens to own ships and engage them on behalf of Rome's food supply, social and fiscal privileges were given to those ship-owners who dealt with the *annona*. As long as Rome controlled its grain-provinces, which it did until Late Antiquity, the authorities succeeded in keeping hunger away from the masses of Rome.

The Roman World Beyond the Capital

Imperial and municipal officials often expressed distrust towards the merchants and traders who operated on the urban food market. While modern economic thinking welcomes profit-orientated activities as the necessary basis

for commercial activities fulfilling consumers' needs, ancient rulers condemned merchants as greedy profiteers who manipulated the market for their own good. The hands of the authorities were nonetheless tied when dealing with the urban food supply, because they lacked the means and inclination to circumvent trade altogether. The conditions of the urban market are reflected in the measures that imperial and municipal authorities took.

In 93 AD the Roman provincial governor intervened in the grain market of the town of Pisidian Antioch, located in the interior of Asia Minor. His edict was inscribed in stone (Sherk, 1988, no 107 = *AE*, 1925, 126 = Freis, 1994, no 65).

Since the duoviri and decurions of the most splendid colony of Antioch have written to me that because of the harsh winter the market price of grain has shot up, and since they have requested that the people have the means of buying it – with Good Luck on our side – all those who are either citizens of the colony of Antioch or are inhabitants of it shall state openly before the duoviri of the colony of Antioch, within thirty days of the time when this edict of mine has been posted, how much grain each person has and in what place, and how much for seed or for the annual allowance of his family he deducts. The rest of the grain, the whole supply, he shall make available to the buyers of the colony of Antioch. Moreover, for the selling time I establish the next Kalends of August. [...] Since, furthermore, it has been confirmed for me that, before the persistent harshness of the winter, eight or nine asses was the price of a modius of grain in the colony, and since it is most unjust for the source of anyone's profit to be the hunger of his citizens, exceeding one denarius [=16 asses] for one modius as the price of grain I forbid.

The governor ordered local authorities to take an inventory of locally available grain stocks and to establish for each owner the amount that he had to put on the market. Second, he determined a maximum price for the grain sold on the local market. This price, which at one denarius for a modius was probably significantly higher than normal at this time of year, was to be valid until August 1 of that year, i.e. until the arrival of the new crop on the market. The two elements of the governor's regulation are indissolubly connected, as there would have been no point in enforcing the supply of the market without establishing a maximum price, and it would have been equally pointless to establish a maximum price without enforcing a market supply. It is worth emphasizing that the authorities' control was limited to locally available resources. The councilors invited the governor to take these measures, as they either lacked the power and influence, or – more probably – were unwilling, to enforce these measures on local landowners. The governor restrained the profit-oriented tendency of landowners and merchants to postpone sale of their stocks and to drive up prices as far as possible, but the edict does not take into account external supplies. The governor neither expected significant imports to reach the market of Pisidian Antioch, nor was he in a position to

enforce their arrival.

Demand did not automatically lead to supply. Hence, many towns established grain funds. The officials in charge of these grain funds – wealthy citizens acting *pro bono* – bought grain on behalf of their community, but not necessarily each year. There is much unclarity regarding the question of from whom the officials (*sitonai*) bought the grain, but the parallel case of *elaionai* (oil buyers) in Athens may be instructive. A decree by the later emperor Hadrian concerning Athens shows, first, that landowners were limited in exporting olive oil and, second, that they had to deliver one-third of their produce to the city's oil buyers. Dispensations were only given when there was an exceptionally good harvest. Now, if the grain funds operated along similar lines, they had privileged access to grain grown by local owners. Such seems to be indicated by Ulpian (*Digest* 7.1.27.3), who says that it was usual for landowners to sell part of their crop to nearby cities at a low price.

As we have seen, attracting supplies was a recurrent problem for cities in need of grain. This is reflected in the functioning of the *sitonai*. A *sitones* from Sparta, who held this post three times, informs us that he travelled to Egypt in order to buy grain and that he managed to ship the grain home without losses (*SEG* 11.491). Three *sitonai* from Tralleis bought grain in Egypt too. Apparently, these wealthy citizens were directly involved in acquiring imports, which was a case not of attracting outside traders, but of actually travelling overseas to get the necessary supplies. The necessity for authorities to intervene directly by buying and importing grain reflects the weaknesses of the market to deal with food crises. Merchants did not always respond to pressing demands by bringing external surpluses to local markets.

In Petronius' novel *Satyricon*, set in southern Italy in the first century AD, one of the characters complains about the corruption of the magistrates "who play 'Scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours' in league with the bakers." In the good old days, he continues, when a man such as Safinius had been *aedilis*, a small coin had been enough to buy a large loaf of bread, but during the current drought a loaf was smaller than an ox's eye (*Sat.* 44). The connection between bakers and the *aediles*, whose tasks encompassed supervision of the markets, is confirmed regarding Pompeii, where candidates were supported by graffiti such as "Please elect Gaius Iulius Polybius *aedilis*. He has good bread" (*CIL* 4.429). The cost of bread on the urban market was not regulated by determining the price of a loaf of bread, but by regulating its weight. Hence, the complaint about the small size of bread in times of dearth. We find evidence of this in other times and places as well. The system reflects the concern to achieve some degree of price stability for urban consumers by authorities who are faced with inadequate means to control and determine the supply on a volatile urban market. Small reductions in weight were less obvious to the public and thus less likely to trigger unrest. In addition, ancient currency lacked the small denominations to make small changes in the price

of a loaf of bread.

Conclusion

Local authorities had good reason to keep the food prices on the local market low, but their control of the food trade was very much limited. Urban authorities controlled neither outside food sources nor the activities of traders. At best they could only hope to create conditions that attracted foreign traders or go out in search of available stocks themselves. Cities inland had soon exhausted their possibilities, as the threshold of high transportation costs over land put outside surpluses beyond reach. The power of imperial rulers went much further, but they were mostly interested in the populace of the capital, who could be considered the most privileged, if slightly malnourished, consumers of the ancient world.

FURTHER READING

A veritable treasure grove on all matters of ecology, climate and food supply is the work of Sallares (1991). Very useful is the work of Horden & Purcell (2000). Garnsey (1988) investigates the vulnerability of the ancient food supply to disruption and the various strategies employed to ward off hunger. Erdkamp (2005) discusses production, trade, and distribution of grain in the Roman world.

Invaluable on diet in Rome is the work of Garnsey (1991, 1999). More general is that of Foxhall & Forbes (1982). Recent systematic analyses of bone data, in particular of trace elements in skeletons, add to our understanding of the diet in the ancient world: see now in particular Killgrove (2010). However, one should be wary of broad generalizations on the basis of small samples. General introductions are to be found in the work of Kron (2005a) and McKinnon (2007).

On trade and the grain market in Athens, see in particular the work of Whitby (1998), Rosivach (2000), and Moreno (2007). On the control of prices and related measures, see Figueira (1986), Reger (1993), Migeotte (1997, 1998), and Sosin (2002).

Rickman (1980) deals with the various aspects of the grain supply of the city of Rome. Tengström (1974) offers a study of the grain supply in late imperial Rome. There are numerous detailed studies of the distribution of olive oil and wine in Antiquity. More general on olive oil are the works of Mattingly (1996), Peña (1998), and Broekaert (2008). On wine, see Purcell (1985).

On urban food riots, see the work of Erdkamp (2002). On market intervention by the authorities in the Roman world, see Dardaine & Pavis d'Escurac (1986), Herz (1988), and Mrozek (1994). On grain funds, see Strubbe

(1987/1989) and Zuiderhoek (2008).

NOTE

1 <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/news/story/2011/08/11/clinton-famine-africa-funding-stability.html>. Consulted August 15, 2011.

PART 3
Preparation

CHAPTER 18

Men, Women, and Slaves

Andrew Dalby

It is hard to trace decisive historical developments between the beginning and end of the classical period, not least because some of the earliest relevant texts, notably the Homeric *Odyssey* (c. 650 BC) and Plato's *Symposion*, were classics exerting powerful influence on later behavior. It is rather easier, on the basis of surviving sources, to draw contrasts between Greek and Roman behavior. It is an enticing possibility to compare both of these with the social behavior described in contemporary Jewish sources, though there is no room for this here. It is easy, again, to compare with the behavior of various non-Greek and non-Roman cultures as described in Greek and Roman sources, but the realism of these descriptions has to be questioned.

The sources are principally literary, partly iconographic. Both are desultory. The first highlight is the *Odyssey*, brilliantly persuasive but scarcely possible to pin down to a time and a place. Then, specifically from Athens, there are comedies of the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, which can be read alongside the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon, adding details from Athenian forensic speeches: this is a rich collection of evidence, especially if combined with Athenian vase paintings, though this is risky because social realism on vase paintings flourished and died nearly a century before the literary texts. Then, leaping across a geographical and temporal divide, we have the literature of Augustan and early imperial Rome, beginning with poetry from Catullus to Horace, ending with prose from the fictional *Satyricon* of Petronius to Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*: all this forms a second rich cache, alongside which there is contemporary information from mosaics, wall paintings, reliefs, and archaeology. Other places and periods are more obscure to us, but we can draw on various scattered texts, occasional inscriptions, and the mass of sources from all periods excerpted by Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, after ad 400) and most notably Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistai*, after ad 200). The social behavior of Jews in the Roman Empire and on its borders is seen from one viewpoint in the Gospels, from another in the Mishna and Tosephta.

The excursus "Homeric society and its food," later, demonstrates the detail to be found in one important source and indicates some ways in which it may be explored and questioned. Other texts and media, likewise, demand to be read in their own terms before links and comparisons begin to be made.

Inequality is inherent in the sources, all created by men, mostly by educated writers, mostly for educated audiences and viewers. They display limited interest in the behavior of women, children, peasants, and slaves; men were in

any case reticent about their own households and their womenfolk. The real balance of power cannot be clearly seen at our distance: we can hardly evaluate the significance of women's management of household stores (Xenophon, *Oikonomikos*) against men's overall pre-eminence, and we do not really know whether male physicians' dietary theories, which would have led to poor nutrition for women and children (e.g. Soranos, *Gynaikia*), were put into practice.

Two other inequalities should be signaled. Slaves appear in the title of this chapter but few general claims can be made about their food because (like men and women, indeed) they did not form a discrete social unit. On those attached to households a little will be said below: the only confident statement that can be made is that they came last in the pecking order. If food was in short supply they had even less of it than others; in lavish households and at times of celebration they managed better. Celebrations reached even those who were agricultural laborers (Cato *Agr.* 57).

Soldiers ate differently from other people: their mealtimes were dependent on their commanders and on the routine of a large and rule-bound community. During active campaigning they were further dependent on surrounding events and on the supply chain. We have some information at various periods on the food they received, but rather little on their social behavior: Xenophon's *Anabasis* is the best depiction of the daily life of such a group, with many references to food and drink.

Classical Greece

Social inequality is clearly visible, notably in classical Athenian society. In Athenian sources it is rarely the dinner (*deipnon*) that is described, much more often the drinking party (*symposion*) that sometimes followed it, and these were occasions for men, recalling the aside by Isaios in a forensic speech: "Married women do not go out to dinner with their husbands, nor do they care to dine with men of other families" (*On Pyrrhos' Estate* 14). Thus in Plato's *Symposion* the discussion – of love, heterosexual and homosexual, physical and less so – is wholly among men. Participants were at least superficially equal, some deference being shown to a host or to an honored guest, some ritual humiliation imposed on a joker (*gelotopoios*) or other temporary victim: note Sokrates' reply when asked (in a later anecdote) whether he was annoyed at the mockery of him in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, "No. The theatre is a *symposion*, and I am the butt" (Plu. *Mor.* 10c). Prominent in comedy fragments is the stock character *parasitos*, one who ate with another without being able to return the invitation: compare Plato, *Laches* 179c in which adolescent boys are allowed to share their fathers' meal as *parasitoi*, a choice of terminology that emphasizes, by contrast, the relative equality of male adults at their meals.

If dinner or a drinking party took place at a courtesan (*hetaira*)'s establishment it was, of course, the men who paid. Elsewhere entertainers, musicians, dancers, and prostitutes were sometimes present; in Plato's *Symposion* Sokrates proposes dismissing the flute-girl (hired by the host in advance) to "play to herself or to the women indoors," leaving the men to their philosophy (176e). What happens to the flute-girl who afterwards arrives with Alkibiades (212d) remains unspecified. In cases where women were present no surviving text shows any direct interest in whether they ate, or indeed whether they spoke. Thus too with the boy and girl who danced in Xenophon's *Symposion*: not a word of dialogue is given to them, nor does any character address them, though their act is the subject of prolonged discussion (2.1). We may make a sidelong comparison with one of the meals (some centuries later) at which Jesus is described as present. At those meals, likewise, the discussions are among men; nothing is said of servants or women except when "a woman of the town, a sinner" enters and anoints Jesus with perfumed oil. Her action is discussed and Jesus speaks to her; no words of hers are in the story (*Ev. Luc.* 17.36–50).

On family meals in classical Athens few sources used to be available, and those not very informative, until the rediscovery and publication in 1959 of Menander's *Dyskolos* (*The Bad-Tempered Man*). It will repay sensitive reading. A sacrifice and lunch (*ariston*) at a country shrine near Athens take place just offstage, forming the background to most of the action of this play. The meal gradually turns into a betrothal ceremony and is followed by a *symposion* and dancing. This dénouement is of course more typical of comedy than of real life; the social setting appears, none the less, realistic. Women of the family, including female slaves, are present though scarcely seen, heard or named. They melt into the background. Yet the whole event, its timetable, its menu, the hire of a cook-sacrificer (*mageiros*), and the choice of the sheep to be sacrificed and eaten, had been decided by women and slaves (the hero's mother is depicted as unusually pious). The cook and a male slave arrive first and make preparations, then the women. The sacrifice takes place before the freemen of the household are present; they turn up afterwards and eat their meal.

It seems generally true for this time and place that women and men ate somewhat apart, if not at separate times then in separate circles; "four tables for the women and six for the men" are specified at a comedy wedding (Euang. fr. 1). Slaves had a reasonable hope of enjoying the leftovers on such an occasion and of participating in the celebration. The *symposion* was male, but all-night festivity was particularly associated with women. Details that can be extracted from *Dyskolos* support these observations (Dalby, 1996, 2–8 and references therein).

Much has been said in modern scholarship of the Athenian courtesan (*hetaira*), also of the *mageiros*, both in his religious aspect (Berthiaume,

1982) and in his recurrent appearance as a stock character in comedy (Wilkins, 2000a). He might or might not be supported by a *trapezopoios*, a “table-maker” or waiter (Antiph. fr. 152; Men., *Dysk.* 644–7). The flatterer (*kolax*), another stock character, and his variant the *parasitos* interested Athenaeus (234d–245b) and several modern scholars (on all this see “Further Reading”). The *symposiarchos* or temporary president of the drinking party – not the host – is discussed by Plutarch (*Table Talk* 1.4) more seriously than seems to be justified, given that in other sources he is scarcely mentioned.

Later Greece

In later Greek society, under the Hellenistic monarchies, though under Homeric and classical influence, inequalities of wealth asserted themselves more openly. Kings learned from earlier eastern monarchies to display their power and success through lavish entertaining. *Hetairai* were reborn as royal mistresses, *parasitoi* return to their older incarnation as *kolakes* or flatterers; those who dine with the king can aspire to be no more than *parasitoi* and *kolakes* themselves. For better or worse, royal banquets are practically the only focus in our sources for this period, selected and retailed by Athenaeus (especially books 5 and 12; Murray, 1996). Whether initiated by Alexander, by the Persian monarchy before him, or by some other, the fashion for very large royal banquets – of 100 couches or more – persisted among his successors. But the most complete description now available is of a smaller event, the wedding feast of Karanos in early Hellenistic Macedonia, with 20 guests and spectacular entertainment (Ath. 128a–130d). Under the Roman Empire, the Hellenistic monarchies having meanwhile withered and died, the sources offer a few vignettes of life in Greece among simpler people, notably in *Lucius or the Ass* (printed among the works of Lucian) and in Dio of Prusa’s *Euboean Oration*. In the two peasant families depicted there (7.65–79) an unmarried daughter serves the men’s meal, as if to confirm Aristotle’s observation: “the poor, having no slaves, must use their wives and children as servants” (*Pol.* 1323a4).

Rome

The social behavior of Etruscans and Italians at meals had seemed to Greeks extremely odd. We need not take quite seriously the excursus on this topic by Timaios (Ath. 517d) but we should compare it with the iconography (De Marinis, 1961) and notice particularly that “the women dine not with their own husbands but with any men who happen to be present, and drink toasts to any they choose.” This prefigures the image of Roman dining that emerges from sources of the early Empire: in stark contrast with classical Athens, women often reclined among men at meals (Horace *Odes* 3.6 and many later sources). The claim by the Roman antiquarian Varro that this marked a

decline from austere earlier customs seems ill founded (Roller, 2006, 96–8). There were nuances, however. Some guest lists, fictional and real, are exclusively of men (e.g. Horace *S.* 2.8, the *Cena Nasidieni*) or include mistresses but not wives. At the historical dinner of the high priests in 70 BC (Macr. 3.13.10-12; Tansey, 2000) there were separate circles, two of men and one of women. At Trimalchio's fictional dinner (the *Cena Trimalchionis*: Petr. 26–78) the only woman guest reclines but the host's wife is with difficulty persuaded to do likewise. Trimalchio's dinner is instructive if sometimes hard to interpret, its aim being to satirize the behavior of the newly wealthy of the first century (the host is himself a vastly rich former slave) and one of its methods being *reductio ad absurdum* (Dalby, 2005).

Whatever was the case with women, children up to a certain age would perch on a male relative's couch: Suetonius, writing a century after the event, thought Augustus old-fashioned to apply this rule to his grandsons Gaius and Lucius, who from Suetonius' viewpoint were heirs apparent to the Empire until their early deaths (*Aug.* 64).

At Trimalchio's dinner, soon after the moment just described, Trimalchio invites his slave attendants to recline with his guests; throughout the episode slaves are prominent and vocal, to the disgust of the fastidious and hypocritical narrator, who is himself attended by his lover (temporarily playing a slave role). At the same period, in real life or at least in Suetonius' biography, Galba, briefly emperor, used to give handfuls of food from the meal to his attendant slaves, another old-fashioned practice (*Gal.* 21). Slaves can hardly be imagined as standing behind the couches – in the traditional dining rooms of Roman and Greek architecture there was often no such space – but rather as crouching beside a couch, serving in the center of the room or waiting around the entrance. If the cook was sent for in one of Trimalchio's theatrically planned incidents, so, no doubt, he might be sent for in real life, to be praised or blamed.

Entertainment in Rome might be more varied and elaborate than is described for classical Athens. It could be more violent, if indeed gladiatorial combats took place at dinner in continuation of an Etruscan practice, as Nikolaos of Damascus (Ath. 153f) asserted that they did. Performances of mimes and plays are described, as are recitations of poetry. The dancing girls of Syria, at the eastern end of the Empire, and of Gades (Cadiz) at the western end, were equally famous and no doubt distantly related. Augustus sometimes employed storytellers; Suetonius' list of the entertainments this emperor chose for his private meals (*Aug.* 74) confirms that there was overlap between the kinds of performance that were given as interludes during public games or as street entertainment and those that a host might arrange for a dinner.

Placing and Politeness

The placing of diners is not discussed in Greek contexts: in this way, if in no other, Greek diners were really equal. The typical dining room with its limited number of couches (often five, seven, or nine) would stretch when needed because couches could be shared, as Alkibiades, late arrival in Plato's *Symposium*, shared that of Sokrates. At shrines, where several parties might dine at the same time, there were multiple dining rooms still of similar size.

Posture and placing mattered to Romans. There are several references to the issue in sources already cited, and a discussion in Plutarch's *Table Talk* (1.2–3). In the traditional dining room (*triclinium*) nine places could be named on three large couches forming three sides of a square. More than nine diners could squeeze in, especially if some were sitting rather than reclining. In the later Empire the semicircular *stibadium* was the fashion, even less definite in its numerical capacity and less fixed in its placing. Placing perhaps gradually ceased to be a problem.

Horace's *Cena Nasidieni* (S. 2.8), like Trimalchio's dinner, is a model of what should not happen. In the *triclinium* the guest of honor had a traditional place, at the lower end of the middle couch, and the host normally reclined to his right, at the upper end of the lowest couch; if Nasidienus gives up this place to a gourmet friend who will explain the menu and the recipes, Nasidienus has made a bad decision and in any case no one needs to drone on about the food. In general, politeness at meals is partly a matter of how one behaves, partly of what one says and does not say. One text relevant to these issues is the episode in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (1122–1537) in which a son teaches his father how to recline at dinner. The four principal texts, though, are Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai* (so long and inconsequential that the relevant material is not easy to find), Plutarch's *Table Talk*, the *Cena Trimalchionis*, and various epigrams of Martial in which dreadful examples are trenchantly presented. Here, again, sensitive reading will bring new insights.

In Homeric society a guest was asked his origin and intention only after he had eaten. Hence Nestor can ask his guest Telemachos, as the meal ends, whether he is a pirate (*Od.* 3.90). In Petronius this might have been a *reductio ad absurdum*; in formulaic oral poetry, in the depiction of a society for which this is the only evidence, we do not know that it is. We cannot hear the laughter.

Homeric Society and its Food

The society depicted in the *Odyssey* is a construct worth studying, whatever its relation to reality. If one sets out to treat the poem as a closed system, the resulting description is seductively coherent and complete.

To begin with, a singer (*aoidos*) was frequently present at dinners in big

houses (but the frequency might be a requirement of plot economy, *Sch. Od.* 8.43) and might be recalled to perform regularly (*Od.* 1.153–4, 8.43–4). He would not sit with the feasters, around the walls, but would have a stool placed for him “in the middle” (*Od.* 8.66, 8.473): servants would supply the singer with food and drink to be taken when wanted (*Od.* 8.62–70, 8.474–83). The pig-farmer Eumaios asks:

Who, when himself just arriving, calls in another stranger from elsewhere, unless one of those who are public workers, a seer or a healer of sicknesses or a maker of shields, or again an inspired singer, who gives pleasure by singing? These are invited by mortals all over the boundless earth

(*Od.* 17.382–6).

Thus the singer is numbered among “public workers,” as Hesiod’s proverbial lines in the *Works and Days* confirm: “Potter hates potter and joiner joiner; beggar is jealous of beggar, singer of singer” (Hes. *Op.* 25–6). As independent as beggars, singers were at the opposite end of the spectrum of esteem. At dinner, though not counted among the feasters, they were not members of the household either: while others’ places showed them dependent on one of the feasters, the singer’s did not. Odysseus on Scherie was not the singer Demodokos’s patron, yet he presented him with food (*Od.* 8.475).

A beggar’s (*ptochos*) view of society is seen in Odysseus’ approach to Eumaios’s isolated cottage (shared by him, his slave and laborers). The welcome depends initially on whether Eumaios decides to overrule his dogs. He does, and gives his guest food and wine. When the laborers return Odysseus shares their meal; in the morning he helps Eumaios make a fire and set out breakfast – the only breakfast in the poem – food “ready cooked, which they had not eaten up the day before” (*Od.* 16.50).

In town it would be more chancy. “Take this unhappy stranger to town,” says Telemachos to Eumaios soon afterwards, “for him to beg his meal there: whoever wishes will give him crust and cup” (*Od.* 17.10–13). In the event Telemachos is more generous than these words imply:

Telemachos called the pig-farmer over, taking a whole loaf from a fine basket, and as much meat as he could hold in his cupped hands, and said: “Go and give the stranger this and tell him to go around all the suitors, begging. Shyness is not a good quality in a needy man”

(*Od.* 17.344–5)

Beggars face competition. “Have we not plenty of other vagrants besides,” demands Antinoos, one of the suitors reveling in Odysseus’ house, “troublesome beggars, cleaners-up of feasts?” (*Od.* 17.376). It will be useless to beg for food and offer nothing in return. In Eumaios’ cottage Odysseus earns the loan of a warm cloak with a tale of his adventures, and pays for hospitality in the evening with work in the morning. At a big house in town,

with numerous feasters, he can hope for better chances. “I should soon do whatever they wanted,” says Odysseus, “laying a fire, splitting logs, carving and roasting meat, pouring wine, and the sorts of things the worse do to serve the good” (*Od.* 15.317–24). He is offered farm work, though with a caveat: “If you have learned bad ways ... you will want to skulk about the town to get the fodder for your starving belly” (*Od.* 18.363–4). This last option, vagrancy and odd-jobbing, has been chosen by Odysseus’s rival, the beggar Iros (who resembles the *parasitoi* of classical Athens in that “the young men had a nickname for him”: *Od.* 18.1–7).

There are no women beggars in the *Odyssey*, but a myth told by Sokrates in Plato’s *Symposium* (about 380 BC) suggests one way a female vagrant earned her food:

The gods were celebrating, Craft’s son Resource among them. While they were at dinner, Poverty came begging, as she would when a feast was on, and hung about the door. Resource became drunk on nectar (wine did not yet exist), went into Zeus’s garden and sank down to sleep; and Poverty, deciding in her resourcelessness to have a child by Resource, lay down beside him, and there she conceived *Eros* “sexual love”

(*Smp.* 203b).

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (early fifth century) suggests another way. The goddess Demeter herself, as a beggar woman, offers to “nurse well a newborn child, holding it in my arms” (*hHom. Dem.* 138–9).

If not driven off by sticks, stones or dogs, a beggar progressed as far as the doorway and sat and observed. Within was one main room, *megaron*; the hearth was near the center of it with a smoke-hole above. In a house bigger than Eumaios’s this need not be the only room: in Odysseus’s house there were a store-room and an upstairs, but the *megaron* was where social activities of all kinds took place. It was where most men of the household slept, and outsiders if there was room (*Od.* 14.523–4; if not, on the verandah). It is where Odysseus, still disguised, talks with Penelope after the feasting is over.

One focus of the *megaron* was the “equal feast” (*Od.* 8.98; *Il.* 1.602, 23.56) already evident by sound and smell to a passer-by, the dining and drinking of the feasters (*daitymones*) who sat on benches and stools around the walls. In front of each was a small table. Surrounded by the feasters, separated from them by their tables, “in the middle” was the household: women and children, dependents and slaves. In the middle of these was the hearth. Odysseus, looking forward to his late-evening interview with Penelope, expects to get “nearer the fire” (*Od.* 17.572). The layout was difficult for commentators of later times to understand: trying to grasp why queen Arete sits “at the hearth,” a scholiast explains that “it was winter” (*Sch. Od.* 6.305). In reality the hearth is mentioned because it was the central point of the room, and the center for

the household – as opposed to the feasters – in particular, but that made no sense to later scholars. For them men feasted in a dining room from which the household was excluded. More recently M.I. Finley was certain that Arete has got things wrong: her position is “contrary to all the rules of Greek society of the time” (Finley, 1956, 98). Nausikaa understands better, neatly expressing the dependence of servants on mistress and the interdependence of man and woman:

[My mother] sits at the hearth in the glow of the fire, spinning her sea-purple wool, lovely to see, leaning against a pillar, and house-girls sit behind her; and there my father’s chair leans against her, where he sits and drinks his wine like an immortal

(*Od.* 6.305–9).

During dinner the conversation among the feasters is all that we hear; what the household says to itself is not part of the story. We hear what the feasters eat and what they give to others, not what the household eats. Activities surrounding the meal are described in one of two relevant “typical scenes” that are surely drawn from preceding oral tradition:

Heralds (*kerykes*) and busy attendants were some of them mixing wine and water in bowls, some again with porous sponges washing and setting out tables, some portioning out plentiful meat ... [The feasters] were sitting in rows on couches and chairs, and heralds poured water over their hands, and house-girls piled out bread in baskets, and boys filled bowls with drink; and they set their hands to the food laid out ready

(*Od.* 1.109–49, repeated elsewhere with variants).

In the image of meals at Odysseus’s house there is room for all the servants mentioned elsewhere: the housekeeper Eurykleia, the house-girls whom Odysseus will soon put to death, also heralds (carelessly borrowed from the formula at *Il.* 18.558), attendants on the suitors, boys, and a carver. Serving meat and pouring wine are, as Odysseus puts it, “the sorts of things the worse do to serve the good” (*Od.* 15.324), but there is little specialization. “Maids cleared away the dinner-things” (*Od.* 7.232), and in Odysseus’s house Penelope appeared in the *megaron* when her maids were clearing up (*Od.* 19.59–64). Even Eumaios is served by one slave (*Od.* 14.407–56).

As to children, we can start with a vignette of feasting in the *megaron*: its source is the *Iliad*, c. 675 BC) and its theme is the child whose father is dead:

The day of orphaning makes a child all friendless ... In need he approaches his father’s companions, pulling at one by the cloak, at another by the tunic: and of those who pity him one holds out a cup, for a moment, and wets his lips but does not wet his mouth. And an *amphithales* chases him from the feast, hitting with hands and attacking with insults: “Go, then! You have no father dining with us.” In tears he approaches his widowed

mother ... though on his father's knee he used to eat nothing but marrow
and rich mutton fat

(*Il.* 22.490–501).

The *amphithales* is apparently a child with both parents living (the Greeks had a word for it). In the *Odyssey* we read of Arete's preparations for Nausikaa's picnic: "Her mother was putting all sorts of satisfying food in a hamper, was putting cooked things in, was pouring in wine into a goatskin" (*Od.* 6.76–8). But this is not specifically food for a child: similar preparations are made by Kalypso when Odysseus is ready to embark. "The goddess put in a skin of black wine for him, that was one, and another of water, a big one, and provisions in a leather bag; she was putting in many satisfying cooked things for him" (*Od.* 5.265–7).

On women's food we have only the scene in which Kalypso and Odysseus eat together for the last time before his departure.

They came to the hollow cave, the goddess and the man together. Well, he was sitting there in the chair from which Hermes had got up, and the *nymph* put out every food for him to eat and drink that mortal men eat. She was sitting facing godlike Odysseus, and house-girls put out ambrosia and nectar for her; and they set their hands to the food laid out ready

(*Od.* 5.194–200).

The immortals of Greece could not eat human food, so the fact that Kalypso eats differently from Odysseus might not necessarily imply a distinction between the sexes; we may however think that it does, and that a woman would serve her man before her maids (if she had maids) served her.

Aside from the household's regular meals, it was proper for newly arrived guests to be given food and drink on arrival. The feeding of a guest requires a different "typical scene" (Heubeck, West, *et al.*, 1988, v. 1, 94; Dalby, 1995). The rules of hospitality as poets saw them led automatically from the arrival of a guest to the offer of food and the setting up of a table in front of the guest's chair: just one table, even on the one occasion when the host (Telemachos) eats at the same time as his guest Mentor (the goddess Athene in disguise). The text depicting this meal can be compared with the "typical scene" of feasting, quoted above, with which it happens to be interwoven.

A maid bringing hand-water poured it from a fair gold jug over a silver bowl for the wash, and drew up a carved table. An aide housekeeper had put out bread, and bringing it, having added many relishes, regaled them from what was there; a waiter put out bronze trays of all sorts of meats, and put out gold goblets for them; a squire often passed by, pouring wine for them

(*Od.* 1.136–43, repeated with variants at 7.153–77 and 14.72–113).

A pair of meals whose juxtaposition has seemed inexplicable occurs at the point where Telemachos and Peisistratos arrive at Menelaos's while a wedding feast is in progress. After bathing, the newcomers eat under Menelaos's eye (*Od.* 4.47–68): what becomes of the wedding feast? Two solutions were proposed by early readers, both requiring the text to be adjusted: some deleted the wedding feast (*Od.* 4.3–14); some retained it and added extra lines, based on *Iliad* 18.604–6, to round it off. It was the second solution that prevailed in the manuscripts and therefore in modern editions (the interpolated lines are *Od.* 4.15–19). If we remove these intruders, we have the text that Athenaeus read. He explained it by proposing that the wedding feast is over by now, and Menelaos and Helen are eating the leftovers (*Ath.* 180c–f). We should prefer to say that the wedding scene had served its purpose and was supplanted, in the poet's mind, by the obligatory feeding of newly arrived guests (Dalby, 1995).

Among the inequalities in the “equal feasts” of the *Odyssey* one remains to be discussed. The power of distributing food and wine defined one's relations with others. One aspect of this was the giving of special honors to guests and others. The evening meal at Eumaios's farm, with the disguised Odysseus as guest, was the occasion for the sacrifice of “the best of the pigs ... we, too, shall enjoy it” (*Od.* 14.414–5). It was in the nature of the “equal feast” that the carver, here Eumaios himself, cut the whole sacrifice into portions, one of which was for the gods (*Od.* 4.3–14. “In Greece this is still done with great ceremony, and beforehand. The host stands, and picks over the whole dish of bits, putting fair equivalents towards each of the guests, before helping on to the plates – a clear survival from the plateless stage” (J.L. Myres in Monro, 1901, 39). But the other portions were not equal after all, because Eumaios “honored Odysseus with whole spare-ribs of the white-tusked boar,” a portion that Odysseus himself acknowledged as good (*Od.* 14.437–8). This particular honor was a notable one, though not unique in the *Odyssey*: Menelaos selected the same cut (though of an ox!) for Telemachos and Peisistratos (*Od.* 4.65–6, cf. 8.474–83, *Il.* 7.321, 9.207). Eumaios's generous act may be one of those details in which the poet makes him pay unrealistic but touching respect to the master he has not yet recognized. It was a gift of food from host to guest but also from client to patron, but Eumaios is supposed not to know this.

If the supply of meat was to be divided into portions, one who was not among the feasters could not be the beneficiary of general charity (there was nothing left over) but had to depend on individual generosity or patronage. Odysseus received a handful of meat from Telemachos's share and then, at his instruction, went the round of the feasters to beg for more. It was not for him to pick and choose what went into his bag, any more than for a mendicant Buddhist monk with his bowl: he would hope to get some selection, relatively good or bad, from what the feasters were eating.

Eumaios at his evening meal, after making a libation, hands the wooden wine-

bowl to Odysseus first. The drinking could never quite be equal if there were fewer cups than diners, as there evidently were in Eumaios's cottage, but, more than that, passing a wine-cup was somehow a more normal vehicle for unequal honor than selecting portions of food. Odysseus, about to depart from Scherie, gets up from among the feasters to hand a wine-bowl to his hostess Arete. When Mentor (the disguised Athene) and Telemachos arrive at Pylos while Nestor and his people are sacrificing, Nestor's son finds a reason in Mentor's apparent seniority to pledge him and hand him the cup first, a mark of respect to herself of which the disguised goddess, not known for her sense of humor, naturally approves.

Odysseus in his narrative says of a gift of wine that Maron of Ismaros had made to him "none of the slaves or servants in his house had known it, but himself and his dear wife and one housekeeper only" (*Od.* 9.205–7). The nature of the housekeeper's responsibility for wine was parallel, it may seem, to the carver's role in dividing meat, and one passage of the *Iliad* does actually refer to a *daitron*, a "share" of wine:

Idomeneus, among the swift-foaled Danaoi I value you, whether in war or in any other matter, or in feast, and when the best of the Argives mix the aldermanly smoky wine in its bowl. Well, while the other long-haired Achaeans may drink a share, your cup always stands fuller, as does mine, to drink when the spirit urges

(*Il.* 4.257–63).

The concept of a share of wine is mentioned only to invalidate it. Meat and wine are not parallel. They were distributed in ways that were thought of as different, although no single text contrasts them. Meat was divided into equal shares, one (inedible, perhaps) for the god, one for each feaster: it may be just credible that this equality, divinely mediated, was not compromised by the choice of a special portion for a guest of honor. On archaic vase paintings of banquets the diners' portions are obsessively depicted as equal (Schmitt Pantel, 1990, 18). However, wine was under the householder's authority: how correct it was of Telemachos, not yet a householder and never depicted unambiguously as one of the feasters in his father's house, to take a supply of the second best wine with him to Pylos and Sparta, leaving the best for his missing father (*Od.* 2.350)! Wine was mixed with water by the householder, was selected at his whim and was distributed as he chose. This distinction between meat and wine corresponds to that between sacrificial meal and symposium, rightly shown to be central to Greek city life in studies by Pauline Schmitt Pantel (1990): it may, though we cannot quite know this, have been consciously present to the mind of the poet of the *Odyssey*.

The picture that the *Odyssey* gives us is of nascent cities (*poleis*) that have scarcely yet taken up the baton: small households (the tradition knows little of large and wealthy ones) individually defend themselves against the world.

The recurrence of stories of kidnapping and enslavement is notable. Outsiders who had no household – whether temporarily as travelers or indefinitely as vagrants – were reluctantly admitted within household defenses. On returning home Odysseus's most dangerous moment is just outside his own house. "Do not hesitate here," Eumaios tells him, "or someone noticing you outside may throw stones at you or chase you." "I am not unfamiliar with beatings and stonings," the disguised beggar replies (*Od.* 17.278–9, 283). The centrality of food in the reception of an outsider is evident. The new arrival gets the leftovers from the last meal, and in this way is admitted to the household through partaking of what is "inside."

FURTHER READING

The primary texts culminate in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai*, a work that gathers within itself much of the earlier classical source material. The new Loeb edition is completed (Olson, 2006–12).

Secondary literature at first took two forms: commentaries on the texts alongside monographs on aspects of ancient dining. There is no commentary on the *Deipnosophistai* in any modern language; for those who read Latin, the single volume by Isaac Casaubon (1600) was reworked and much expanded in the multi-volume commentary by Schweighäuser (1801–07). Both can be found on line. They act partly as guides to what other ancient sources said on the topics raised by Athenaeus; for this specific purpose nothing has replaced them. Commentaries on other relevant ancient authors are worth exploring and need not be listed here. With regard to recently rediscovered texts note the edition of the Vindolanda tablets from northern Britain by Bowman and Thomas (1994) and that of Menander's *Dyskolos* by Handley (1965). On topics related to Roman households the sourcebook by Gardner and Wiedemann (1991) is convenient.

Modern writings on classical Greek dining and symposia begin with the work of Andrea Bacci (1595). Concerning symposia plenty of later work exists; Murray (1990b), followed by Murray & Tecuşan (1995), offers a handy guide to it, a state of the art and more. For dining see the work of Slater (1991) and Dalby (1996, 1–22), which deals with Menander in some detail. For Greek cooks see Berthiaume (1982), Lowe (1985), and Wilkins (2000a); for *parasitoi* Arnott (1996, 336–43, 542–7), Fehr (1990), Bruit Zaidman (1995), and Wilkins (2000a, 71–87); for *hetairai*, Peschel (1987) and Davidson (1997).

On Roman dining, various studies of specific sources are useful: those of Baker (1988) and Caston (1997) on the *Cena Nasidieni*, Dalby (2001) on Suetonius, Boyce (1991) on the *Cena Trimalchionis*. Additionally and in general see the work of D'Arms (1991) and Dunbabin (2004) on slaves and attendants, Roller (2003) on women, Dalby (2000b, 257–66) on dinner as the

place for courtship, Roller (2006) and Dunbabin (1991, 1998) on placing and posture; also Allison (2001) for new approaches to archaeological evidence and Griffin (1985) on poetry. Iconography is the primary focus for De Marinis' work on Etruscan banquets (1961) and in Dunbabin's important work on Roman material (especially her 2003 volume). For women, see Burton (1998) and Corner (2012).

Greek soldiers, as viewed through Xenophon's *Anabasis*, are the focus of Dalby (1992); on Roman soldiers see Davies (1971) and Dickson (1989). As regards Homeric society, the latest general survey is by van Wees (1992), but his focus is on warfare. For meals and their context see the work of Dalby (1995); on servants in particular, Ramming (1973) and Greenhalgh (1982).

CHAPTER 19

Kitchens

Bradley A. Ault

Introduction

As in the case of dining, activities associated with the kitchen are evidence for the “movable feast” that characterized both the preparation and consumption of food in antiquity. This brief survey will take into account what we know as well as what we can surmise about Greek and Roman kitchens. It draws heavily upon archaeological remains, our most abundant and reliable resource, albeit with the same sorts of limitation that characterize literary and historical documents, for shedding light upon this seemingly mundane but fundamental locus of domestic activities. While frequently mentioned in the ancient authors, where in the absence of specific terms for the kitchen (for these, see later) combinations of food, fire, and smoke suffice to suggest its presence, these do little to inform us about its physical manifestations otherwise. Indeed, any place where the transformation from unprepared to prepared foodstuffs occurs, the conversion of “the raw” into “the cooked” (paraphrasing Levi-Strauss, and thanks to the agency of the primal elements of fire and water), may be considered a kitchen. These range from the presence of the most basic of impermanent and transient surfaces and heat sources to more elaborately finished and fixed installations. Indeed, more important than the space itself, it is the equipment and paraphernalia of food preparation and cooking, the “*batterie de cuisine*” (Sparkes, 1962, 121), that help to define the presence of kitchens. Grinding slabs, mills, mortars, hearths, braziers, grills, skewers, pots, pans, knives, ladles, and such comprise the tools of the cook. Where these are found, and especially where they co-occur, we are increasingly likely to be “in the kitchen.” Of course, the food itself is largely absent, and it is here that the written sources do so much to complement the archaeological remains, as are the many other perishable items we would expect to find: wooden implements, shelves, and other furnishings, woven and hide accessories especially, as well as those of metal, subject as they are to corrosion and recycling.

By default, an account of kitchens takes us into the realm of households. And so it is a consideration of Greek and Roman domestic structures that guides this exploration. Scant attention will be paid to either the kitchens of Bronze Age Greece or pre-Roman Italy, in part because household archaeology was until recently given short shrift beside the recovery of monumental architecture, tombs, and works of art, and lags even further behind for these periods. Neither do the limited literary sources support the evidence for

kitchens to anywhere near the same degree. It is safe to say by way of generalization, however, that Greek and Roman kitchens are the legacy of their forebears.

Greek Kitchens

While Athenaeus takes pride of place for discussing Greek cookery, it is Aristophanes who most frequently makes mention of the kitchen itself. The general terms employed are *ipnos* (-*non*), *kapnos/kapnodokei*, and *optanion*. Pollux and Athenaeus also supply us with *mageireion*. However, we would be poorly served if our inquiry ended there. Writing in 1962, Brian Sparkes lamented that “the search for the presence of [ancient Greek] kitchens from architectural features is unlikely to prove very fruitful” (Sparkes, 1962, 132). Although this statement provided support for his concentration on Greek utilitarian pottery and artistic depictions of food preparation and cooking, Greek houses excavated at a number of sites dating from the Classical and Hellenistic periods have yielded definite evidence for kitchens, or, at the very least, distinct areas where food preparation and cooking were carried out.

The city of Olynthus is located on the Chalcidician peninsula in northern Greece and furnishes us with some of the best and earliest examples of identifiable Greek kitchens. Olynthus was laid out on an orthogonal plan after 432 and destroyed by Philip II of Macedon in 348 BC. Excavated between 1928 and 1938, the plans of over 100 houses were recovered (out of as many as 500 which may have comprised the 30-plus ha of the city’s urban landscape). Nearly half of these revealed “architectural features” that can allow us to identify the presence of a kitchen. Termed the “oecus complex” by the excavators, who at that time relied on Vitruvius’ description of the Greek house (6.7), this tripartite suite comprised a main room, which in six instances contained a central hearth; a “flue,” often paved with stone and containing traces of burning; and a small bathroom (*balaneion*), finished with waterproof plaster on the floor and walls, and in more than a dozen cases preserving a terracotta hip-bath or traces of one. It is worth considering each of these elements in brief, since they provide something of a template for kitchens to come.

A main room, the *oecus* proper, dominated the Olynthian “kitchen complex.” The presence, or moreover the absence, of a central hearth here provokes thought. The hearth as seat of the household is a long-standing tradition. It is ever present in Greek, and later, mythology and epic. Symbolic realm of Hestia (and later Roman Vesta), it would seem *de rigueur*, yet the majority of Greek houses that have been excavated at Olynthus and elsewhere lacked one. So, when not purely functional, the hearth would appear to be just that: symbolic, a distant recollection of the large and elaborate central hearths that lay at the heart of the great hall (*megaron*) of the Mycenaean palaces. Lending

additional support to its transformation is the fact that, while the hearths of Mycenaean *megara* were round, virtually all hearths known from subsequent domestic contexts are square. Hestia was still present, to be sure, but she need not be seated at a built or fixed hearth to continue to preside over the domestic realm.

At Olynthus, the practical (and symbolic?) function of the hearth was in part superseded by the flue. This feature occupied one side of the kitchen, from which it was typically set off by a pillared partition, in order to support the weight of the second story, which continued above it, but through which the flue passed (as chimneys typically do today). Providing ventilation for smoke and allowing the circulation of air, the flue may also have served to admit naturally diffused light into the dark interior of the kitchen. The main purpose of the flue, however, must have been for cooking and as a heat source during the cold Macedonian winters.

Benefiting from its proximity to the flue was the bathroom, which occupied a diminutive space along the same wall of the kitchen complex. From the flue, water could be conveniently heated for the tub or any other receptacle, then reused to clean the area itself before being emptied into shallow drainage channels that frequently linked the kitchen directly to the street or via alleyways that punctuated the longitudinal axis of the housing blocks themselves.

Although the Olynthian kitchen complex is unique for its inclusion of a flue space, the pairing of kitchen and bath is encountered elsewhere as well, the latter reinforcing the identification of the former, and is a functional antecedent to the Roman custom of locating latrines near kitchens, where water from domestic tasks found its final reuse in the “flushing” of toilets. In the Greek world, similar kitchen–bath complexes are widely distributed, having been identified in late Classical and Hellenistic houses from Halieis in the southern Argolid, Eretria on Euboea, and at Morgantina in Sicily. As such, and for good reason, the arrangement was clearly a favored option for domestic design.

But what of the houses from these and other Greek sites, including those of the pre-Classical periods, where kitchens are less readily identifiable on the basis of architectural or other built features? It surely does not mean that they lacked kitchens, but that their presence must be understood in less fixed, more temporal and transient terms. Indeed, the use of space within Greek houses was above all defined by flexibility, by the seasonal and social scheduling of activities. Like informal eating versus planned dining, but even more so, the preparation of food could take place anywhere, providing the necessary equipment was at hand. Aside from interior rooms provided with adequate light and ventilation, the preferred location for food preparation and cooking appears to have been in the courtyard or the covered porches opening off the courtyard, which served as transitional spaces to the main suites of household

rooms. In instances at Kolophon and Priene, both dating from the fourth century BC, and located along the Ionian coast of Asia Minor, some houses reveal traces of hearths built against the side wall of these porches (the so-called *prostas* porch). Kolophon is unique in also having square hearth-altars in the courtyards of its houses. It is, however, the presence of the portable equipment for cooking that allows us to identify the “floating” kitchens of Greek households.

For pre-Classical Greece, houses from the Early Iron Age through Archaic periods were typically quite simple two- to three-room affairs arranged in a linear fashion and lacking the central courtyards that became a hallmark of housing from the fifth century BC on. While some were provided with interior hearths (e.g. at Zagora on Andros, ninth to eighth centuries bc, and Azoria on Crete, seventh to fifth centuries bc), most, again, were not. In such houses, where single rooms served to accommodate all the functions of domestic life, from sleeping to eating, food preparation and cooking on open fires must have often taken place outdoors, likely in front of the house. Indeed, it is the open space that stood before the house proper that would be transformed into an enclosed courtyard in the fullness of time.

In the absence of and as a supplement to built hearths, the Greeks cooked on portable braziers. Many examples of these survive. Known as the *eschara*, these come in a great variety of forms, from simple to complex. Most commonly constructed of coarse clay prepared with thermal properties in mind, examples existed in bronze as well, but have for the most part not survived the melting pot. A particularly fine and otherwise unique bronze *eschara* was discovered at Olynthus, where it survived buried beneath the floor of a house, no doubt cached there during the Macedonian sack of 348 BC. An iron cooking tripod from the late fifth century bc kitchen of Building Z.2 in the Athenian Kerameikos offers another possible alternative in metal. Terracotta examples of “cooking stands” and braziers from Hellenistic Delos are particularly elaborate, and include the application of mold-made decoration. Such braziers were fueled with small kindling, or preferably charcoal (Olson, 1991). The latter provided a hotter, longer, more consistently burning and less smoky medium. The production of charcoal was an important, if lowly, occupation in antiquity, laborious, hot, and dirty business that it was; hence the comic effect of a chorus of “charcoal burners” in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*.

Other Greek cooking wares constitute a particularly distinctive class of material and are worth mentioning here. The *chytra* was a deep stew pot, the *lopas* a shallow casserole. Both were round bottomed, configured with various arrangements of handles, and could be covered with lids. Various other implements such as cooking domes (*pnigeis*), grills, parching pans, strainers, basins, storage jars and bins, jugs, and ladles survive in the same distinctive coarse ware cooking fabric selected to withstand the “thermal shock” of direct

exposure to fire (as their burning attests). Their hand-built versus wheel-thrown manufacture also contributed to resilience in the face of rapid and extreme heating and cooling. Our most explicit graphic depictions of kitchen activities come not from vase-painting, as one might expect, but from a series of terracotta figurines, the finest of which are attributed to Boeotian workshops. Their subjects range from grinding and kneading to cooking at grills and baking at ovens. Unfortunately, very few of these have documented find-spots, but we assume they served a votive function.

So ultimately the Greek kitchen was a portable affair. While it could have a fixed location, as identifiable kitchens do exist in the archaeological record, it was just as or more often characterized by mobility. And while similarly movable, the evidence for fixed Roman kitchens in the archaeological record, thanks to the evidence primarily from Pompeii, is also greater.

Roman Kitchens

Although references to kitchens and cooking areas occur far more frequently in Latin literature than in the Greek sources, they still do little to shed light on the physical attributes of such spaces. The term *culina* is the most specific, since it refers explicitly to an area for the preparation of food. *Caminus*, *furnus*, *focus*, and their derivatives all refer to the fireplace, oven, and hearth respectively, but their usage can extend to industrial, baking, and bathing establishments as well. In terms of location within the Roman dwelling, areas for food preparation may be combined with those devoted to other functions in small houses or the ubiquitous *tabernae* that dotted the thoroughfares of Roman cities, or be given separate rooms. In larger houses, which might have multiple areas for cooking and food preparation, kitchens tend to be relegated to the rear or flanking regions, out of sight from rooms for public and formal reception, as cooking was tended to by slaves, who often fed themselves in the kitchen while serving their masters at table. Reheating and also cooking are attested within and adjacent to dining rooms themselves. Just as the Greek kitchen may be attended by a small bathroom, so too the Roman kitchen might have a latrine located nearby. Both serve to remind us that water for cleaning and cooking food, for cleaning the kitchen, as well as for hygienic purposes generally, was as essential a component of culinary activities as the foodstuffs and fire used for the preparation of meals. Food and household debris, along with human waste, were deposited in latrines (all purpose “garbage disposals”) and collected subsequently to be reused as fertilizer, a profitable enterprise for those involved (the *stercorarii*). Water was supplied either by the house itself, ideally collected naturally from wells or cisterns, or by civic officials who insured its delivery to public fountains via aqueducts. Wealthy private houses could, by special arrangement, be directly connected to the public water system, but this was routinely used to supply ornamental water features and private baths, rather than kitchens and latrines.

The eruption of Mt Vesuvius on August 24, AD 79, affected a wide area around the Bay of Naples, burying in its wake the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and a host of other settlement areas in the Roman landscape. Since 1748, when excavations at the site began, some two-thirds of the walled 66 ha of Pompeii has been brought to light again, accounting for over 15 000 individual structures and providing us with an unparalleled sample of a modest to well-to-do Roman city of the Early Empire. With virtually all aspects of public and private life represented in the ruins of Pompeii, it is perhaps surprising that only a single study has been devoted to a systematic analysis of its kitchens (Foss, 1994), and this was adroitly combined with a consideration of dining rooms. Whereas most archaeological sites preserve only the foundations of buildings, the depth of burial at Pompeii under nearly 5 m of volcanic debris preserved standing structures, giving a much fuller picture of their elevation, and conserving a greater percentage of whole artifacts in the process. Thus it is from the circumstances surrounding Pompeii's interment that a picture of Roman kitchens emerges, which while not necessarily valid for all variation across the length and breadth of the Empire over time, certainly provides an excellent cross-section.

The most significant built features of the Roman kitchens at Pompeii, which have been documented elsewhere as well, are the hearth, the stove, and the oven. Hearths consisted of low masonry platforms (averaging up to 0.50 m in height) atop which cooking fires were built. In shape they are square to rectangular to triangular. Stoves are more substantial masonry constructions, ranging from 0.50 to 0.90 m in height, averaging 1.00 m deep and up to 3.00 m in length. They are always built against a wall, ideally preserving traces of a window above to allow for the escape of smoke and to provide ventilation generally. The upper "cooking" surface of the stove is finished with flat "pan" tiles, stones, or plaster, providing an even fire-resistant working surface atop which the heat source of wood, or preferably charcoal, was located. Its edges may also be bounded by half-round cover or *imbrex* tiles or masonry arms extending from the back wall along the sides of the stovetop, which offered further containment of the fire and debris. The surfaces of some ovens show a division into individual burners by means of narrow masonry supports. Generally the masonry platforms themselves are punctuated with arched or rectangular openings, which are believed to have provided for the storage of fuel. Ovens in private houses at Pompeii are uncommon, likely due to the existence of public bakeries, which provided much of the bread consumed by the city, but present nevertheless. Their arrangement is discussed in the context of baking and bakeries (see Monteix in this volume).

Just as the Greek kitchen is defined not only by its activities but by its apparatus, so too the Roman *culina* will have possessed not only a heat source, but a myriad of implements used in the preparation of food. These include bowls, jars (sg. *olla*), jugs (sg. *urceus*), pots and cauldrons for boiling

and stewing (sg. *caccabus*, *ahenum*), baking dishes, skillets for frying (sg. *sartago*), mortars (sg. *mortarium*) for grinding, and so on. The biggest difference between the equipment of the Greek and Roman kitchen is the higher proportion of metal vessels used in the latter, especially those of bronze in the more well-to-do. Cooking pots were placed directly into, hung above, or otherwise suspended over the fire, by means of an iron grill or any of a variety of ceramic, stone, or metal stands (the pointed “toes” of broken *amphorae* were favored as simple devices for raising cooking vessels above a heat source). Portable braziers (sg. *foculus*, *foculare*) for both heating and cooking are attested in ceramic, bronze, and iron, and indicate once again the peripatetic nature of cooking. Baking covers (sg. *clibanus*, *testum*) were similarly portable, and used to contain the heat of a fire, which was cleared away, then replaced by the item to be cooked, with the coals often packed around the cover itself. Cooking equipment could be stored in the kitchen, stacked, shelved, hung, or kept elsewhere nearby in the house. The same variety of locations was used to store foodstuffs both within and beyond the confines of the kitchen.

Finally, the Roman kitchen, too, could serve as a locus of domestic cult, even more explicitly than the Greek. Household *lararia* are found in some 94 kitchens at Pompeii, second only to their location in peristyles and gardens (where 126 have been noted), and in greater number than those situated in *atria* (with 67 examples; Foss, 1997, 202, n. 19). Although most survive as simple niches in the wall, devoid of their cultic contents but for traces of the painting that once adorned them, these simple shrines serve to underscore the fundamental life-giving force of the humble kitchen to the household as a whole.

FURTHER READING

Brian A. Sparkes’ article “The Greek kitchen” (Sparkes, 1962) had already been preceded by Sparkes and Talcott (1959), and was followed up in Sparkes (1965), Sparkes and Talcott (1970), and Sparkes (1981). More recent considerations include those of Foxhall (2007b) and Tsakirgis (2007). For Olynthus and its kitchens, see the work of Robinson and Graham (1938), Robinson (1946), and Graham (1954). Cahill (2001) provides an excellent up-to-date overview of the site, including its kitchens. For Halieis, Eretria, and Morgantina respectively, see the work of Ault (2005), Reber (1998), and Tsakirgis (1984). For Kolophon and Priene, see Holland (1944) and Wiegand and Schrader (1904). For Zagora, see the work of Cambitoglou *et al.* (1971, 1988). For the ongoing work at Azoria, see the project website at <http://www.azoria.org/> (with comprehensive bibliography). For Building Z in the Athenian Kerameikos, see the work of Knigge (2005).

Studies of Pompeii abound. Most recently see Berry (2007a) and Dobbins and

Foss (2007). In addition to Pedar W. Foss' work on Pompeiian kitchens (Foss, 1994, 1997), see Salza Prina Ricotti (1978/1980) on Roman kitchens (including those of Pompeii) generally. The work of Penelope M. Allison and Joanne Berry is fundamental for combining contextualized considerations of material culture and the use of domestic space at Pompeii (see Allison, 2004, 2007; Berry, 1997, 2007b).

CHAPTER 20

Baking and Cooking¹

Nicolas Monteix

According to Suetonius (*Cl.* 40.2), Claudius, during a sitting of the Senate, asked the conscript fathers, in the course of a discussion on wine sellers and butchers, if “anyone could live without a meatball (*offula*).” Despite the mocking tone of the historian with respect to the emperor, and despite the fact that we cannot determine the precise context of the senators’ reflections on the sale of wine and meat, it is clear from this anecdote that “taverns” could offer a food service, and that this type of shop (here, the *taberna* in general) could draw a large clientele. It therefore seems legitimate to look at these establishments, which carried on a trade in prepared food, in order to understand everyday food practices.

The present chapter is divided into two sections that support each other. On the one hand, the interlinked and complementary study of literary, epigraphic, and material sources allows us to understand the slow diffusion of bread as the preferred mode of grain consumption in antiquity – without by any means being the only mode; second, we will discuss food and cooking by way of these “restaurants,” which appear to have had the *plebs* as their principle customer base, the imperial visits recalled by Suetonius notwithstanding.

While a few examples from the Greek world will briefly be mentioned, the main characteristics and developments presented here concern the Roman or Romanized world, primarily in a chronological context focused on the beginnings of the Empire: Pompeii and Herculaneum remain favorable observation points due to our good knowledge of their urban fabric, despite significant distortions related to their specific histories. Other sites of the West – such as Ostia or the extensively excavated cities of North Africa – and the East have not been studied from this point of view, often for historiographical reasons.

Baking

“It is to the baker (*pistor*) we go to get bread.” By this phrase, which seems familiar, Plautus (*As.* 199) indicates the existence, from a very early date, of craftsmen specializing in bread-making. Nevertheless, except for a few scattered references, it is almost impossible to define how bakeries were equipped in this period.

However, the literary sources covering the years between the first century BC

and the fifth century ad are much more numerous and appear fairly uniform, indicating a possible stabilization of production techniques throughout the entire Empire, from Italy to Germania, through Gaul, Africa, and the Orient. In addition to the texts, and especially the many paragraphs of Book 18 of the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, iconography – funerary reliefs and frescoes – and archaeological remains show us some or all of the various stages of bread-making. If a majority of the reliefs represent mills, operated by donkeys or horses, it is because the grinding of wheat into flour is the first activity of bakers. It was not until the third century ad that milling sometimes became an independent activity, as it remains today. Until that time, it had always been associated with the various phases leading to the preparation of bread (kneading, proofing the dough, baking) – except in the case of water mills such as that at Barbegal, which developed from the early second century ad (Leveau, 1996, 2007).

Of all known reliefs, that of the mausoleum of Marcus Virgilius Eurysaces is the most comprehensive. Located in Rome, just outside the Porta Maggiore, it shows, on three of its surviving sides, the sequence of baking operations: the verification of the quality of grain received; milling – with the representation of two mills powered by donkeys whipped by men; sifting, cleaning of the flour with sieves; verification of the quality of the flour by the baker; kneading, using a kneading machine driven by a donkey; loaf-making by hand by two teams of slaves; baking; and eventually weighing and checking of the baked loaves (Ciancio Rossetto, 1973; Petersen, 2003). If all of these details were not clearly visible in passing to one entering the capital of the empire, they clearly suggested the activity of the entrepreneurial baker (*redemptor pistoris*), recalled with pride by the epitaph. Comparing the ten reliefs showing the practice of *pistores* (Zimmer, 1982) with surviving remains, notably of bakeries in Pompeii (39; Monteix, 2010a, 133–67), Ostia (8, but larger; Bakker, 1999) and Volubilis (14; Leduc, 2011), to mention only the principal examples, it is possible to reconstruct the entire process leading from grain to bread.

The early stages of grain preparation – drying, threshing, and winnowing (Thurmond, 2006, 20–3) – are difficult to locate: iconography associates certain instruments used for cleaning the grain with the bakery, while archaeology still remains silent on this point, returning the first stage of preparation of grain to its place of harvest. Milling is the extraction of the heart of the grain, the kernel, from its envelope to be ground into flour. A summarized technological history would show a gradual transition from the pounding of grain to the use of grinding wheels, at first employing a back-and-forth motion – beginning from the late Neolithic, and in use until the Hellenistic period in the Greek world – and later a circular action, which slowly spread between the sixth or fifth century BC and the end of the first century bc (Runnells, 1990; Frankel, 2007, 219–22), from the western

Mediterranean, Carthage (Morel, 2001), or northeastern Spain (Alonso-Martinez, 1997). Once this system was adopted, the task of generating the circular motion passed from man (rotary hand querns and then rotary mills) to animals and then to water (Wikander, 2008). We should take note, however, that while the three energy sources eventually existed side by side, according to use – domestic, commercial, and hydraulic – it is the horse-driven rotary mill that best represents the process of milling, both in the iconography and in the bakeries known through archaeology. Whatever the type of rotary drive, the principle remained the same: insert the grain in an opening at the top of the millstone – the *catillus* – so that it is ground between the active surface of the *catillus* and the passive surface of the millstone – the *meta*. The fixture of the two parts of the mill depended on the motive power: the *catilli* used in hydraulic mills sat on a spindle to adjust the spacing with the *meta* (Longepierre, 2007, 168–75); *catilli* of the “Pompeian” rotary mills are simply centered, so that it was essential that a human balance the forces exerted by the animal to allow an even rotation.

Once the grain was ground, one had a mixture containing flour, groats, and bran, the envelope of the grain. To separate the flour from the coarser elements it was necessary to bolt the mixture with a fine-meshed sieve made from fabric, papyrus mesh, or horse hair. Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 18.108) recommends repeating the process several times to recover a greater amount of flour.

Obtaining dough is relatively simple in theory: just mix flour with water and salt, and possibly yeast if the bread is leavened, which is usually the case from the first century AD, except in some domestic contexts, such as at certain sites of *Gallia Narbonensis*. The yeast was obtained by two different methods: either by leaving remnants of dough to sour naturally through fermentation by natural yeasts, or by adding “artificial” leavens, such as fermented grain – used in Gaul and Hispania to brew beer – or millet fermented in grape must. Then the first phase of processing began: kneading. The easiest method was to mix the ingredients in a wooden container (Wilson & Schörle, 2009). This method survived until the early twentieth century, but the Roman world also developed a mechanical kneading system operated by human or animal power. This consisted of stone vessels, partially hollowed out on the inside with a cylindrical cavity, whose outer profile slowly changes from a truncated cylinder to a flared cone. The side was generally pierced by one to six cavities made to receive wooden plugs. At the bottom in the middle an iron socket allowed for the stirring system to be slotted in: a metal blade, bent upwards at both ends, was inserted at the base of a vertical axis secured by a horizontal beam. When the man – or animal – rotated the vertical axis, the different dough ingredients were mixed. The plugs inserted into the side of the pan, partially blocking the dough, helped to increase its homogeneity, but more especially its aeration, allowing the yeast to begin to ferment (Figure 20.1).

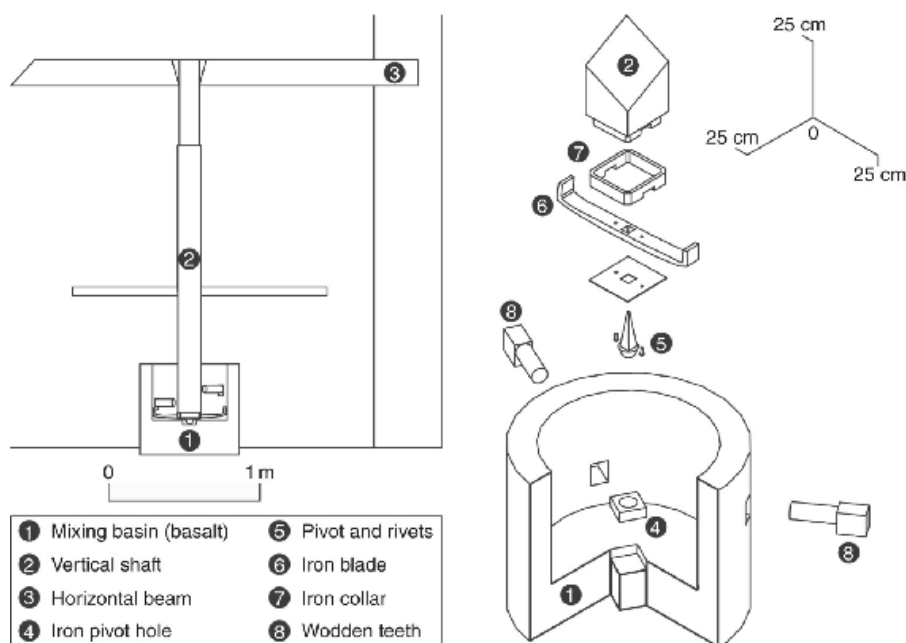


Figure 20.1 Sketch of a mechanical kneading system. Drawing © Nicolas Monteix.

The remaining operations were the processing and fermentation of the bread. In just under one-fifth of the bakeries at Pompeii (8 of 39), we find flared earthenware bowls, with a diameter sometimes exceeding a meter, inserted into solid masses of masonry, or placed on reused grindstones. This large aperture combined with shallow depth would have allowed placement of a large amount of dough for a first rising. The proximity of these facilities to the kneading areas also seems to support this hypothesis.

After this probable light first fermentation, the dough was divided into balls and weighed; then the shaping began. All the reliefs showing this operation indicate that it took place on large tables. Although they were sometimes made entirely of wood, some remains of them survive: quadrangular masonry uprights used to support long boards. Frequently placed in the center of the workspace where the shaping and rising of loaves took place, these large tables allowed for multiple workstations, with workers shaping loaves on both sides of the table. Handling of the dough allowed it to aerate and formed it into chunks. On this point, iconography, mainly Italian, always shows loaves that, when cooked, have radial lines starting out from the center of the loaf. This method of pre-cutting is attested by the discovery at Herculaneum and Pompeii of charred round loaves with a diameter between 14 and 18 cm.

It is rather difficult to determine where the fermentation took place, as the walls do not survive to their original height. In fact, the example of Pompeii shows that shelves – of which only the imprints of the wooden supports

remain – were frequently placed in a room adjacent to the oven, also often containing the kneading-machine. This arrangement was intended to reduce the number of manipulations, while making use of the heat from the oven: the yeasts involved in the fermentation of bread grow better at high temperature, provided that it does not exceed 50 °C. There is no way to determine the rising time, but it is likely, as in the modern bakery, that the loaves were placed to ferment wrapped in several layers of wet fabric; one Pompeian example attests to more than 50 (Médard, Borgard, & Moulhérat, 2011, 84–6).

Baking the pieces of dough was the final step towards obtaining bread. Two traditions are known from the texts and archaeological remains. The first is evidenced discontinuously across the Mediterranean at least since the fifth century BC, and continues to be used today, particularly in North Africa and the Near and Middle East. The principle is simple, as is the implementation, and can be applied both to leavened bread and unleavened flatbreads. The furnace is bell shaped – of fired or unfired earthenware – with a hole at its base to permit draught and fairly open at the top. A fire is made at its center, and once the flames are out the disks of dough are pressed against the walls, on which they cook. A still-unpublished domestic example is attested at Delos in the district of Skarhana, in a part located to the east of the House of Actors, while moveable examples are also attested, of fired earthenware, particularly in domestic contexts in the South of France (Barberan *et al.*, 2006). Known as *artopta*, these ovens seem to have been gradually eclipsed from the first century bc, for some domestic production and for commercial production as a whole, by masonry bread ovens. The latter, in their simplest form, consist of a hearth capped by a dome and set on solid masonry. The forts of the Rhine *limes* have yielded up mass-production facilities, up to 44 in the fort of Saalburg (Jacobi, 1930, 10–19). The well-preserved examples from Pompeii and Ostia show that other facilities were developed in the course of the first century ad, constituting possible improvements (Figure 20.2). The construction of a wall in front of the mouth of the oven allowed the insertion of a chimney to vent smoke outside the space. This wall, pierced by an arch, also allowed the insertion, on the side of the oven-mouth, of a water heater – made of lead in Pompeii – which constituted a source of warm water, destined especially for facilitating the kneading and the first rising of the dough. Finally, when the general layout of the space permitted it, an opening was formed between the kneading-area and the oven, to facilitate transport of risen loaves to the baking room. The presence of breads in the process of being baked when the eruption struck allows us to reconstruct the function of the oven. The baking chamber was first heated with olive stones as fuel before the addition of other plant species; once the temperature reached about 250 °C, any charred remains were removed – collected under the water heater if there was one, or close by – and the loaves were put in the oven. An iron panel closed the oven and baking commenced.

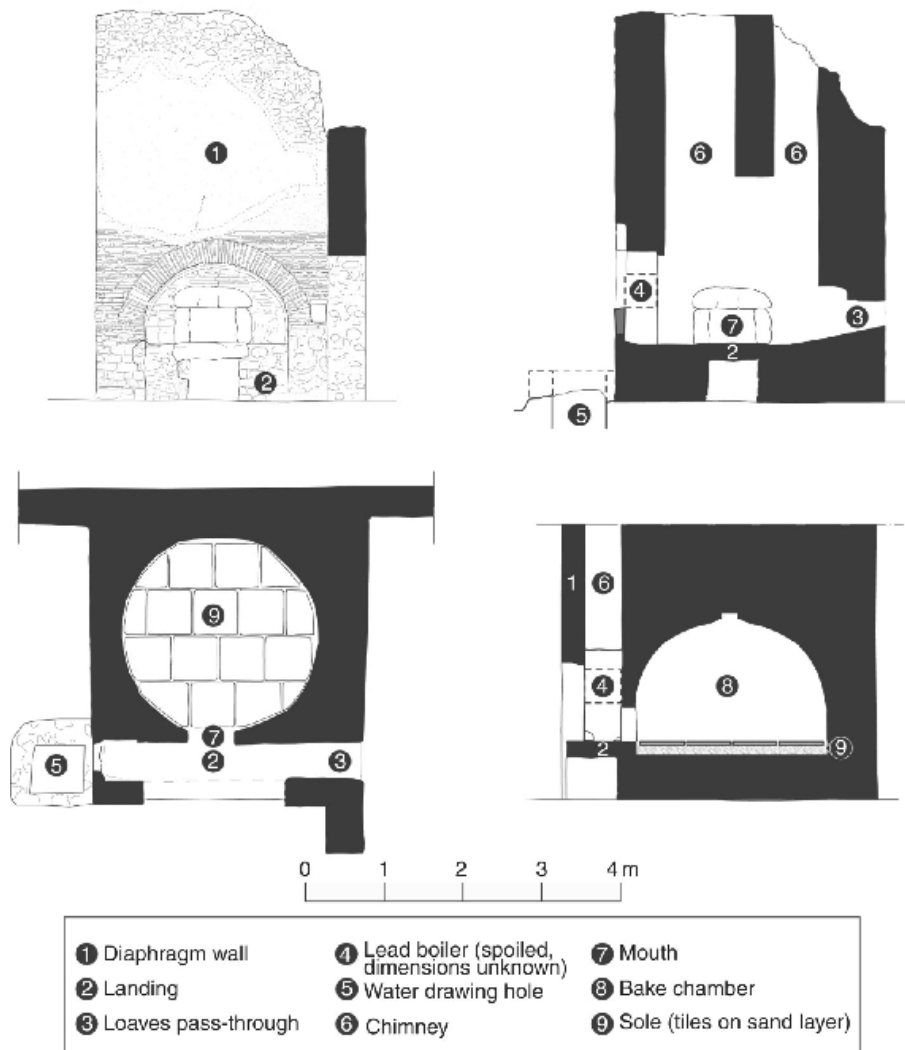


Figure 20.2 Sketch of a masonry bread oven. Drawing © Nicolas Monteix.

At the end of this process, unless the bread was produced in a domestic context, it was sold. While some bakeries had a retail space at the front, this was not true in all cases. Vendors walking through the streets or having a stand at one of the occasional markets – documented around the forum, under the portico of the *palaestra*, and under the arches of the amphitheater – could offer different types of *panes*, as evidenced by graffiti from Pompeii (*CIL* IV 8561a, 8566b). Some food shops also sold bread (*CIL* IV 5380). It could also be freely distributed, by politicians on the campaign trail or as an act of thanks by elected magistrates. A fresco from Pompeii shows a probable candidate – from *candidus*, dressed in white – for a magistracy, seated cross-legged on a podium on which are arranged loaves of bread destined for a population eager to receive them (Museo Archeol. Naz. di Napoli, Inv. No. 9071; see also *CIL*

In Rome itself, where the emperors had long distributed grain to citizens benefiting from the public wheat dole (Virlouvet, 1995), a major change occurred in the course of the third century: bread was substituted for the grain. It was certainly Alexander Severus, engaged in a vast urban improvement policy, who approved this dietary improvement, which implied equally the construction of water mills, known through archaeology on the Janiculum and in the Baths of Caracalla (Schjøler & Wikander, 1983; Wilson, 2000) and the multiplication of spaces for the now-daily distribution (Coarelli, 1987, 445–56). While it is difficult to understand the underlying reasons for this change, beyond a desire to please the urban *plebs*, we may conclude that it marked a decision in favor of the consumption of bread, while at the same time accelerating the changeover to this type of food, at least in the capital of the Empire. Under Aurelian (SHA *Aurel.* 35.1.47), the weight of daily bread was doubled to two pounds, before being tripled under Valentinian in 369 (*Cod. Theod.* 14.17.5). However, while it is possible to assume a constant growth in the consumption of wheat baked in the form of bread, we must not forget other forms of consumption, in particular porridges – *puls* – which were common in the eating habits of the Roman world.

Cooking

Understanding the practices associated with commercial food preparation is a particularly delicate task for the last centuries of the Republic. For the first century AD, however, the examples of Pompeii and Herculaneum allow us both to understand the developments associated with this occupation and to cast some light on their place within the city.

Frequently located in wide open spaces on the street, fitting them immediately for welcoming customers, and so for a commercial function, these premises are mainly characterized by their masonry counters, to which may be added *dolia*, stoves, and various storage facilities. The counter alone does not indicate trade in food: of the 166 premises with this layout in Pompeii, only 158 appear related to food; the other eight are either likely lead workshops, or still uninterpreted (Monteix, 2010a, 127). As the first visible element, the masonry counter is often given special decoration, be it a marble facing incorporating architectural motifs or similar forms of *opus sectile* or painted plaster – potentially figured with still life scenes or religious representations. Far from being status symbols, these decorations had no other purpose than to attract customers, as evidenced by the bareness of the walls intended to be seen only by the merchant. Frequently designed on a square or “U”-shaped plan, the counters are arranged to present an optimal view to passers-by in the street (Ellis, 2004a, 381–3), an effect that could be increased by the presence of display stands – about 10 cm high – on the countertop. Whatever layout

was adopted, one element remains constant: one wing of the counter is always parallel to the opening on the street, very often partially blocking it. In this way, customers could purchase or consume without going into the shop, while leaning on the counter. This provision would allow the use of public space to enlarge the area used by the store, without this constituting a flagrant violation of regulations on this point. On average, these counters have a height between 65 and 70 cm. Their width varies depending on the insertion or lack thereof of *dolia*. An average of 90 cm can be observed. This feature was the backbone of these shops, particularly when used as the location for structures for cooking and storage.

Some 419 earthen jars – including 372 in Pompeii – extremely variable in size, have been identified incorporated into these countertops. No positive data permits the identification of their contents: a single *dolium* was found containing dry food – nuts – when it was excavated in the *Casa del Priapo* at Herculaneum. The other example usually given, that of the *Casa di Nettuno e Anfritrite*, is an invention based on a *mise en scène* posterior to the excavation (Monteix, 2010a, 22–3; *contra* Maiuri, 1958, 402). The absence of such discoveries in Pompeii could be explained by the conditions of the eruption: except in exceptional cases (Borgongino, 2006), the heat would not have been sufficient to bring the dry goods – beans, peas, and other items – to the point of carbonization; only their imprint molded in the ash would have survived, and gone unnoticed upon excavation. The alternative would be to assume that the jars had contained liquids. This would require showing that they had been covered on the inside with pitch, in view of their porosity and the risk of losing their content. Moreover, the very frequent absence of lids on *dolia* would have led to a rapid degradation of any liquid in contact with air. Finally, the frequent presence of wine *amphorae* on the premises equipped with counters, and some attestations of funnels for pouring wine from these *amphorae* into pitchers, render the use of *dolia* for storage of drink unnecessary, even in the case of transportation of wine in bulk from its production site in a wineskin, as attested by the Pompeian iconography. It therefore seems preferable to consider that these jars were used primarily for storage of dry goods, whether intended for cooking or not.

The cooking appointments encountered in many of these shops are mainly of two types. The most common (94 examples at Pompeii) is a water heater that could also be used as furnace (Figure 20.3). By means of a protuberance at the end of one of the wings of the counter, a container was inserted into the masonry. Made of lead, it would have been parallel piped, with a circular opening at the top and possibly a connection to a water distribution network. When made of bronze, it would consist of a boiler with a lid, in which case the masonry would have a circular bulge. In both cases, the container was heated by embers below. A space might be provided in front of this small heating chamber to allow the installation of a movable iron tripod, adapted to

receive cooking pots and pans. The hot water produced was mainly used for mixing with wine. The little stove to the front allowed some minimal food preparation. Some premises have genuine cooking ranges, identical to those fitted in home kitchens (Kastenmeier, 2007, 81–6). Generally built in a corner, the table, between 60 and 80 cm high, was often built with a hollowed and vaulted front side, to deposit in this space the wood used as fuel in cooking. The edge consisted of tile battens (*imbrices*). This space was used to store a bed of coals on which the cookware was utilized.

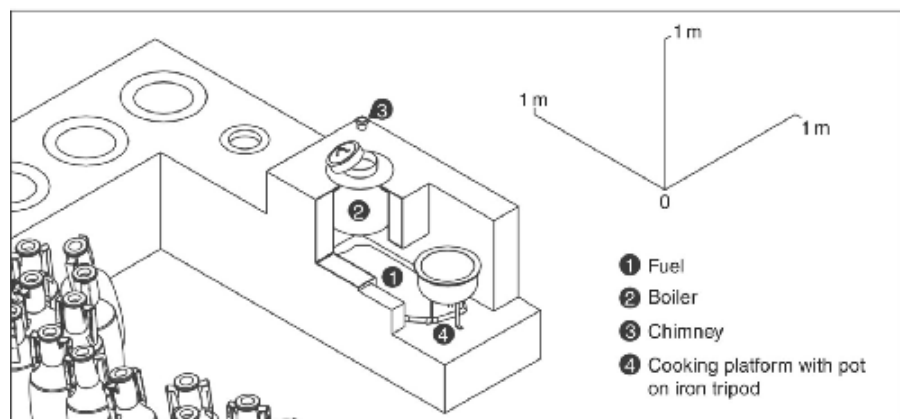


Figure 20.3 Sketch of a water heater. Drawing © Nicolas Monteix.

When all the necessary amenities are met – food storage in *dolia*, cooking range and/or water heater/stove – the premises can be interpreted as restaurants. Their layouts should then be studied case by case to determine if a space for consumption by customers is planned, and if so in what form: some

of these shops, like the one attached to the baths of the *praedia* of Julia Felix, offered a real dining room where meals were taken lying on masonry built *triclinia*, others providing only a small room where prepared food and drinks were consumed sitting, and finally many only allowing a quick snack, taken standing in the street leaning on the masonry counter. There is however no evidence to link the facilities for customers with the type of food served: the objects found in the shop known as “Asellina’s,” the archetype of this form of trade, point to the sale of wine, and preparation of meat stew with some embellishments. Sausages and other pork products may be added to this minimal menu if one relies on their figurative representation in the dining room of the “caupona della Via di Mercurio.” Some price lists can help with this reconstruction (*CIL* IV 4888, 8561). The most interesting of them (*CIL* IV 5380), from the atrium of a house associated with a food business, comprises, in three unequal columns, a list of products distributed over seven days leading up to the Ides of an unspecified month. After each commodity, a price is indicated in *asses*, or sometimes in *denarii*. More than a list of charged prices, it also would have listed the products purchased for the running of the shop. Only bread is mentioned for every day, of several types: simple, coarse (*cibar(ium)*) and for children or slaves (*puero pane*). Next in order of frequency are oil, wine, and cheese.

However, beyond these general reflections on the products sold in some of these premises, it is possible to obtain a better image of food shops by drawing up a typology based on combinations of facilities available to them. The most complete specimens (36/158) present, in addition to the counter in which *dolia* are inserted, at least one cooking surface, possibly (11/36) associated with a water heater; these facilities will have allowed for fairly elaborate culinary preparations, and begin to approach our concept of a restaurant. A second group (46/158) never has a cooking surface; in its place a water heater with a small platform sufficient for simple cooking at reduced volumes was always to be found. Rarely endowed with a room allowing clients to eat reclining or sitting, these premises essentially offered wine and light refreshments. The next group is devoid of any facilities for cooking (26/158): the space has only a counter with an above-average number of *dolia*. These were shops selling simple, unelaborated foodstuffs. The fourth group (26/158) is a strict reversal of the precedent: no *dolium* was present for the storage of solid foods, but the counter always has a water heater, while the excavation diaries attest to numbers of *amphorae*. Only these shops can be interpreted as bars, serving wine mixed with hot water as their principal if not sole beverage. The final group (24/158) consists of spaces lacking *dolia* but having at least one cooking surface, to which a water heater is sometimes added. In this case, the main difficulty lies in determining the forms of storage in these restaurants.

These five major groups of spaces dedicated to the catering trade, although

present in most of the city, are not uniformly distributed. One possible factor that could explain this distribution would be the clientele, the traders having been able to choose their location based on the number of potential customers. It has long been thought (La Torre, 1988, 79–80; Laurence, 1994, 51–69) that the location of these businesses – regardless of their specific activity – depended mainly on the main roads. While 75% of these establishments are concentrated on 42% of the known road network, we should not be limited to this explanation. Thus, some buildings appear to have contributed to the topography of these specialized food-industry spaces through their functions: the *macellum*, a building that closely linked cultic practices and the consumption of meat and fish in Pompeii (Van Andringa, 2006) attracted businesses devoted to the sale of unprepared foodstuffs into the immediately adjacent shops, almost to the complete exclusion of restaurants (Monteix, 2010b, 152). In contrast, other public buildings, especially those devoted to spectacle, appear to have generated only a small polarization. The baths, whether public or private, led to the installation of restaurants in their immediate vicinity, a phenomenon that is also reflected in literary texts (Kleberg, 1957, 51–2). Beyond this mobile clientele, whether coming from outside or taking advantage of the features of specific buildings, residents of Pompeii also appear to have influenced the location of the food industry; it is important then to try to assess the population density in the city in the absence of statistics, mindful of two principles. There is a close correlation between the size of a house, the status of its occupant, and the number of persons that may be received in it: the larger the number of rooms a *domus* has, the lower the density of people per unit area will be – maintaining a large population in absolute terms. Conversely, in the home of “medium” to small size, the use of space would be optimized; habitable commercial spaces are more densely populated, given their reduced surface area, than larger houses (*contra* Wallace-Hadrill, 1994, 92–103); therefore, the greater the number of spaces for independent housing facing the street, the higher the population density. Comparison of street sections across the city shows that 67% of businesses dedicated to the food services are located in densely populated streets or in their immediate vicinity (Monteix, 2010b, 153–6). Shortfalls in terms of food preparation equipment in the most humble apartments (Salza Prina Ricotti, 1978 /1980, 239–41; Kastenmeier, 2007, 16–18, 88–9) located in the most densely populated areas would have been mitigated by the restaurants, but not necessarily as their main vocation.

Having looked at the nature, function, and distribution of these commercial spaces, their names should be examined. The history of names associated with the food industry begins with an ephemeral pun, which had a long career fraught with misunderstanding. Coining a neologism probably related to the onset of consumption of wine mixed with hot water, a fashion apparently imported from Greece, Plautus refers three times to spaces for wine drinking as *thermipolia* (*Cur.* 292, *Rud.* 529, *Trin.* 1013). Recovered – and transformed

into “thermopolium” – in the early nineteenth century by W. Gell (Gell & Gandy, 1819) and Mazois (1824), this term was quickly applied to certain Pompeian business premises, recognizable for their masonry counters in which could be inserted *dolia*, jars of large capacity. While it is pointless to dwell further on this misuse of incorrect Latin terminology – neither the *thermipolium* nor the “thermopolium” ever existed outside the archaeological literature – other terms have been used to designate food shops.

The first of these is *popina*, designating first of all in Plautus alternately a place of food preparation (*Poen.* 41) or a place where the infamous practices associated with an orgy of food and drink were carried out (*Poen.* 335). In the speeches of Cicero, both meanings still coexist in a strongly derogatory context, when the speaker seeks to demonstrate the infamy of the target of his harangues: the first instance refers to the furnace where low-quality foods are prepared (*Pis.* 13); the second, more common (*Phil.* 3.20, 13.24), points to the excess of food. Imperial literature, until the end of the first century AD, continues to employ this term in the neutral sense of furnace (Hor. *Sat.* 2.4.58–62, *Ep.* 14.21; Sen. *Ep.* 95.26; Juv. 11.81), sometimes moveable (Sen. *Ep.* 56.2.9; Mart. 1.41.10, 7.61.8). The idea of superabundant food consumption is much more present, especially in the writings of Seneca, who considers involvement with *popinae* infamous, immoral, and reprehensible from the lack of frugality, incompatible with Stoic ideals (Sen. *Prov.* 5.4; *Ep.* 29.5–6, 51.4, 56.2–9; *Nat.* 3.18.7, *Helv.* 10.3.2, 10.8.7, *Vit.* 7.3.5, 11.4; *Tranq.* 6.8; *Marc.* 22.2). During this same period, the polysemy of the term is enhanced by its application to shady commercial activities, in a pejorative or neutral sense (Petr. *Sat.* 98.6; Plin. *Nat.* 33.32.6). The real metonymic shift appears only during the second century, when *popina* is mainly used for qualifying infamous business premises, *locus inhonestus* in the writings of Vivianus (Ulp. *ad ed.* 13 [Dig. 4.8.21.11]), becoming a *topos* for the places frequented by bad emperors (Suet. *Nero* 26.1, *Vit.* 13.3), a theme widely taken up thereafter (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.6; SHA *Hadr.* 16.4, *Verus* 4.1, *Comm.* 2.7, *Pesc. Nig.* 3.10, *Heliogab.* 30.1, *Gall.* 21.6, *Postum.* 3.4, *Marius* 8.9, *Ingen.* 9.1, *Cels.* 29.1, *Aurel.* 7.6). Only Aulus Gellius (15.8.2, 15.12.2) uses this word to designate orgies and not a commercial space. The *popina* as a restaurant unfit to be seen in thus appears as an extension of the meaning of simple furnace, transformed by metonymy into an immoral feast.

The second term referring to restaurant activities is *caupo*, with its derivative *caupona*, indicating the wife of the first term as much as their place of business. From the first century BC, the meaning of these terms is directly related to commercial hospitality and dining, as shown in a text of Servius (*Pompon.* 6. *ad Sab* [Dig. 33.7.15.pr.]) emphasizing the presence of a slave in charge of maintenance of the household – *focaria* – for the proper functioning of a *taberna cauponia*, or at night in the *exempla* used by Cicero (*Inv.* 2.14-5; *Clu.* 163; *Div.* 1.57, 2135). During the second half of the first century ad, the

term is attested, while retaining its ambivalence: in the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio places the *caupo* under the sign of Aquarius, evidently a complaint against overly watered wine (Petron. 39.12); the *stabulum* where Encolpius lodges and hides Giton is run by a *caupo* (Petron. 97.1, 98.1). This function as innkeeper is reflected in Martial (13.11), Gaius (5 *ad ed. provinc.* [Dig. 4.9.2, 4.9.5.pr.]) and Apuleius (*Met.* 1.7, 1.8.3, 1.21), while services associated with the bar-room appear in Martial (1.26.9, 1.56.2, 2.48.1, 2.51.3, 3.57.1, 7.61.9), Juvenal (9.108), Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.15), Suetonius (*Nero* 27.3) and Apuleius (*Apol.* 24.4, 57.3). This brief review of sources forbids us from following T. Kleberg (1957, 5.38), who insisted on the *caupo* as an innkeeper, reducing in a forced way the food and drinking establishment to a secondary activity. On the contrary, this is the sole term that is associated in the electoral inscriptions and graffiti of Pompeii with business premises that can be interpreted as restaurants and drinking establishments, regardless of the group to which they belong (Monteix, 2007, 120). Four *programmata* have a *copo* as *rogator* (Mouritsen, 198860–8; Chiavia, 2002, 237–45) in front or in the immediate vicinity of such premises (*CIL* IV 494, 537, 629, 1048). A fifth inscription is a facetious painting showing the *copo* sitting on a chair (*CIL* IV 3502). Of the ten graffiti mentioning the term *copo*, only four can be located, two of which have direct relevance to food shops (*CIL* IV 8442, 8529). The principal evidence remains that of a wine *amphora* on which is painted this inscription (AE, 1967, 86d): *Pompeis/ad amphitheatr (um)/Euxino coponi*. The rather vague delivery address suggests that the shop of a *copo* was easily recognizable and that Euxinus was sufficiently well known in the south east area of town to receive his wine. The house consists of a shop, equipped with a counter with two *dolia*, and an area of garden where vine-stocks, masonry couches, and other *dolia* have been uncovered. At least this place held by a *copo* provided food services. The facilities contained therein, as well as those found in other stores identified by electoral inscriptions or graffiti, can make a link between the material remains and the business activities of the *caupo*. The lexical unit that makes the *caupo* the only skilled tradesman associated with the food industry without systematic defamation is in stark contrast with the wide variety of amenities observed in Pompeii. Where we would be inclined to perceive restaurateurs, merchants of vegetables and grains, and bartenders, one trade was identified by the Romans, that of the *copo*, who received strangers to eat, drink, or sleep, but whom, in the words of Seneca (*Ben.* 1.14.1), “no one considers <his> host (*hospes*) [...]”

FURTHER READING

No large-scale synthesis exists for the time being on the production and consumption of bread. For the Greek world, M.-C. Amouretti (1986) remains indispensable. In the Roman world, milling techniques have known, since the pioneering work of L.A. Moritz (1958), a renewal of interest from the 1980s

with the study of hydraulic mills (bibliography in Wikander, 2008; Brun & Fiches, 2007). Peacock (2013) now gives a wide-range overview of mills. Despite elements warranting review, the synthesis of D.L. Thurmond (2006, 13–72) is a remarkable starting point for the use of cereals in the Roman world. Regarding the bakeries themselves, only the syntheses devoted to Ostia (Bakker, 1999), Pompeii, and Herculaneum (Monteix, 2010a, 133–67) consider all the technical issues and spatial problems, at the workshop or city level.

For the structures in Pompeian houses associated with food preparation, the book of P. Kastenmeier (2007) should be consulted. On the food trades, the oldest texts (Mazois, 1824, 43–4; Mau, 1899, 392–7) must be read without giving actual weight to issues of Latin nomenclature, considering only the descriptions of the remains. The – imperfect – development proposed by T. Kleberg (1957) having been often cited but rarely read, works published until the year 1990 should be used with caution (Packer, 1978; La Torre, 1988; Laurence, 1994, 75–87) because of the weight given to the nomenclature. More recent papers on the function and topography of these premises (Ellis, 2004a, 2004b; Monteix, 2010a, 89–132) are to be preferred.

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 21

Dining in Ancient Greece¹

Pauline Schmitt Pantel

“The young man (Ion) ritually marked out with stakes the outline of the sacred tent without walls. He defended it well from the sun, avoiding directing it toward the fires of midday or toward the star when it set. He counted with a line, for each side plotted at right angles, a *plethrum* so that the space contained by the four sides was ten thousand feet, to put it in a learned manner. For he wanted to invite all the people of Delphi to the feast. Then with fabric borrowed from the treasury he shaded the tent. ... In the middle of the room he set gold *kraters*. A herald stretching up on his toes then proclaimed that all Delphians could, if they wished, take part in the banquet. And the room was packed: one saw the guests crowned with flowers and their hearts filled with the joy of abundant good cheer”

(E. *Ion* 1165–70, 1132–42).

Thus Euripides begins the description of the great banquet that Ion will give the citizens of Delphi before reclaiming his position as heir of King Erechtheus in Athens, a dramatic banquet at which his mother Creusa will attempt to poison him.

Food involves many social rituals, from those of the solidarity of agricultural labor in the fields to those of exchange in the village agoras and the markets of urban centers, but it is the occasion of the meal that has given rise to the most numerous accounts, concerning which the established rules are best known. In short, a rich and diverse system of representations developed at different times and in different cities. The convivial experience can be addressed in various ways, as shown by many of the studies in this book. It was inseparable from the processes of production and preparation of the food that was the basis of the Greek diet: the simplest, everyday, ordinary meal was a cake of barley called *maza* with some meager seasoning. It also depended on the ritual blood sacrifice that always preceded the banquet, at least where the meat of domestic animals was eaten; the heart of a banquet was the consumption of meat and grain ritually dedicated to the gods. Finally, texts and images often focus on the moment after eating, when the feasters drank together, the *symposion*, which played an important role in cultural life. Sacrifice and *symposion* emphasized the essential values such as egalitarian sharing and community as well as the way of life, the conversation, and culture of the Greeks, values that vases clearly depict. In these somewhat artificial depictions, meals are separated from all the other events that surround them, complete them, and explain them, but it is the entire dining

culture that one must keep in mind to understand the place and function of dining in the world of the Greek cities.

Meals and Anthropology: a Definition of the Greek Man

Eating and drinking customs were part of Greek self-definition, both in relation to the gods and beasts and as compared with non-Greek peoples. Gods and men were originally side by side at the banquet, as recalled by the myth of Prometheus reported by Hesiod (fr. 1 M.-W.): “Food was then taken in common, and in common the seats of immortals and mortal men.” Then came the ruse of Prometheus and Zeus’s anger: now men, who had the better part of the sacrifice, that of the tasty meats, would have to work for their food, taking wives to reproduce and becoming mortal. Commensality with the gods was ended. In Olympus, however, the banquet is the favorite pastime of the gods, a sign of their carefree happiness. They eat and drink the foods of immortality, ambrosia and nectar, they listen to music, chatting among themselves, and are immune to the worries that trouble mankind.

Among men the meal is the sign of the mortal condition of working the land and eating real foods, now banned from divine status. Through sacrifice and consecration of food, it is also the mark of a communication maintained with the world of gods, symbolically invited to the banquets of men. In short, the banquet defines the human condition.

However, the fact of eating food together, the result of working the land and the domestication of animals, and made edible by cooking, is also a crucial element that separates the human condition from that of animals. Animals eat all kinds of food, produced by nature but not cultivated, they eat them raw, and the carnivorous diet of some even leads them to devour each other. Eating raw food and eating each other are the two marks of the savagery that exists in the animal world.

The meal constructs the limits of the human condition, far removed from the gods and the beasts. However, the meal also has a cultural dimension; it characterizes a Greek way of life opposed to the lifestyle of non-Greeks. It is for the Greeks a yardstick for measuring the degree of people’s civilization. These can be classified from the most extreme savagery to the most refined civilization in a scale running from past to present in time and from distant to near in space. At one end of the scale we find the whale eaters in Diodorus, lost on the northern shores of the world, who never eat together, or the Oenotrians whom Aristotle mentions, who only know the pastoral life. Among these peoples the consumption pattern is disordered, individual, and lacking established reference points in time, daily or yearly; for them eating is primarily for nourishment. The absence of banquets among many peoples is the sign, to the Greeks, of a total lack of community life, even in a nomadic

lifestyle. Megasthenes, quoted by Strabo, admires the Indians, with one caveat: “All these customs are certainly proof of wisdom, but they have others that we cannot approve of as much, such as always living by themselves, and not having a time for dinner or lunch common to everyone, but each eating just as he pleases. It is indeed preferable for coexistence and civic life to eat in another manner” (Str. 15.1.53).

The emergence of communal meals in the history of nations is linked to the institution of laws that build community. Meals are presented as a basic structure of the social group and the haven of sociability in many authors of the fourth and third centuries, Plato, Aristotle, and Theophrastus among others. But it is not enough to know the art and the method of the banquet; it must be practiced with due gravity and wisdom; this is the realm of table manners, which should be considered in this connection, discussed by Robin Nadeau elsewhere in the present volume.

Greek meals were defined in their relationship with the divine world, the animal world, and the barbarian world. But they were constructed above all in relation to their historical and political context. Note that it is the Greek city that is in question here, the Hellenistic kingdoms being discussed in another chapter.

Description

The main meal was held in the evening: this was the *deipnon*. The Greeks ate at two other times of the day. Upon rising in the morning, they ate pieces of cakes of barley or wheat soaked in wine (*akratismos*), and at midday they might take a quick snack of cakes with some seasoning (*ariston*). Meals were organized in two phases, one for eating and one for drinking. When the context permitted, the two sections of the banquet were clearly separated: the tables on which the foods were presented were removed and replaced by others, the cups succeeding the plates. The second part of the banquet or *symposion* is the subject of a specialized study in this book. Meals were taken lying on couches, in front of which removable tables were placed. Diners reposed on blankets with their elbows propped on pillows. Only a few dishes were served; these were eaten with the fingers and any uneaten food thrown on the floor. Slaves provided the service. The section of the house where meals were served was called the *andron*, or “men’s room,” the name of which underlines the exclusive presence of men at the banquet. Spaces were also reserved as banquet halls for meals in sanctuaries and elsewhere in the city. However, banquets could also be installed in any place spacious enough to contain a large number of guests, such as public squares and gymnasiums.

Hospitality, which was an essential value in Greek society, had meals at the core of its practical expression, which could be held in different social groups: family, friends, associations, and of course the city.

Hospitality

To invite a guest to a meal upon his arrival was a gesture characteristic of the finest hospitality: so much so, that the term *xenia* (hospitality) often refers to the meal itself, and several words for meals are formed from the same root. In the Homeric world, the meal as a gesture of *xenia* is common; all the heroes practice it. When Ulysses and Nestor arrive at the palace of Peleus, they find Peleus with Achilles in the courtyard roasting the meat of a cow they are going to sacrifice. Achilles offers them everything that is customary to offer a guest: food and drink. Menelaus in Sparta, celebrating the simultaneous marriage of his daughter and son, invites Telemachus and Pisistratus. He sets a table before them, invites them to partake of the *sitos*, and offers them pieces of fatty beef tenderloin, the portion of honor. Nestor invites Telemachus to a meal (*dais*) after a sacrifice to Athena. His whole family is present: son, sons-in-law, and also daughters and daughters-in-law and the old queen Eurydice (Hom. *Od.* 3.404 ff). Back in Ithaca, Odysseus and his father Laertes take a meal (*deipnon*) in the *megaron* after sacrificing the fattest pig as a way of renewing relations weakened by a long absence (*Od.* 24.412). And the swineherd Eumaeus invites Odysseus to a dinner in his cabin.

Many authors of the fifth century echo the practice of hospitality meals. Pindar speaks of the generous host who first offered a meal to arriving foreigners, and also “tables of hospitality.” The servant in the *Alcestis* of Euripides has served dinner to guests from all countries. And Aegisthus in Euripides’ *Electra* invites Orestes and Pylades to stay at his home and to dine with him.

As anthropologists have shown, sharing a meal, eating together, can make a stranger into a guest, and this change in status is required for exchanges of any kind between communities. The guest becomes a *philos*. Conversely, refusing to share his table, leaving a man to eat alone, is the mark of refusal to integrate into the community for religious, social, or political reasons, as shown by the case of Theseus returning to Athens.

Family

The occasions for banqueting within the family were many; they were especially the holidays that dotted the course of a life from birth to death and also marked the integration into the *oikos* to members outside it. For example, the festivals celebrating the birth of a child: the *amphidromia*, the *dekate* (festival of the tenth day), and the *genethlia* included a meal. The same went for marriage, at two different times: during the *proteleia*, the preliminary rites of marriage, and during the *gamos*, the second day of the wedding festivities. On this occasion the guests were relatives and friends, but also neighbors and acquaintances.

The bridegroom could also offer a sacrifice and a banquet, called the *gamelia*, to members of his phratry during the feast of the *Apaturia*. This served as a means of announcing his marriage to the members of his phratry. The *gamelia* was distinct from the wedding feast offered to relatives and friends; it was the “public” face of marriage, which in Greek law was a uniquely private act.

In the case of births and marriages, meals were an element of sociability, familial in the first instance, and then within the larger group of neighbors and friends. The presence of “witnesses” at these meals had legal standing; it could be invoked in disputes between spouses and between families.

The funeral ritual has several moments of communal eating at the tomb, at the funeral itself, and at fixed dates later. The meal was a way to remember the dead, to recall him in a circle that was more or less close according to family wealth. The anniversary meals of the death of an individual could also be organized by foundations that thus consolidated the social and political weight of a family in the community.

Other rituals served food to mark the integration of a new member into the *oikos*, such as the *Katachysmata*: “the pouring-over,” at which *tragemata* and *trogalia*, dessert foods, sweets, and crunchy foods were poured on the newlyweds or new slaves. The meals at the festival of the *Kronia* also emphasized the unity and diversity of the *oikos*. According to the tradition, the heads of families might eat at the same table as their slaves on this occasion, or the reversal in status between slaves and masters might be complete, with slaves eating, drinking, being garlanded, singing, and receiving courtesans. This inversion was very temporary and actually served to reinforce the social hierarchy.

Associations

Between the family and the political community, the Greek world recognized multiple forms of “community” (*koinon*) that brought together and organized groups of people, most often around the worship of a deity. Epigraphic sources allow us to study these. They were sociable spaces as much as places of worship, and played an important role in the creation and affirmation of social relations, in particular through the holding of frequent meals. The banquets of these associations usually followed the regulations of the city: these regulations were made to fix the expenses and distribution of meat, wine, and grain. Wealthy members came into the habit of offering all or part of the sacrifice and banquet at their own expense, receiving in return decrees in their honor. The association gives the image of a city in miniature, with this important difference: the rules of social participation varied according to the deities honored, and foreigners, even slaves and women, were included to a

degree unthinkable in the context of the city. Beyond the narrow confines of the family or association, meals had a privileged membership in the cities.

A History of Public Dining

The Homeric world

The Greek cities organized banquets bringing together all or part of the civic community and enacted regulations voted by the Assemblies in order to specify how they were carried out. The function and role of these meals vary depending on the historical context. It is therefore possible to write their history.

In the Homeric world, banquets are offered by *basileis*, kings, to the “best” (*aristoi*) of their entourage; in the palace in times of peace (*Odyssey*), between battles in wartime (*Iliad*). The meal (*dais*: a term indicating the act of sharing) is a demonstration of the wealth, power, and generosity of the one offering it, increasing his prestige within the group. Those who participate in the banquet, “the best,” belong to the narrow circle of those able to invite in their turn. This system of gift and counter-gift is indeed a cornerstone of the economic and social functioning of Homeric society. The functions of these banquets are multiple. They express first sharing among equals: all those not of the same rank are excluded from the banquet. They are also the place for words of praise and blame; epic song is recited and sung at banquets, past and present deeds are recalled, and therefore it is also a place of social recognition and the making of memory. The banquet, last, is a place where power is exercised: it is during meals that the king takes advice from his peers, public acts are sanctioned, and royal power is affirmed. Commensality thus has a central place in the Homeric epic, and probably had in the centuries preceding the appearance of cities.

The Archaic Period

Banquets in archaic societies are known through several sets of documents. First there is iconography, as discussed elsewhere in this book by François Lissarrague. Archaic poetry provides the second set of documents. The banquet is indeed both the birthplace of archaic poetry and one of the themes of the poems. The second part of the banquet, the *symposion*, was when one recited the famous epics and new works composed for the banquet. The approval of the guests made the fame of the poet, just as the poet’s song constructed the glory of *aristoi* whose deeds he recounted. The role of reciting poetry at the banquet was essential to the perpetuation of the aristocratic society. However, the poems themselves abound in allusions to the banquet, as evidenced by study of the poems of Theognis and Pindar.

Archaeology provides another set of documents. Several indications of the

importance of meals in the cities of that time exist: the construction of banqueting halls is the first index, the furniture of aristocratic tombs another. This furniture often includes utensils and dishes that evoke the pattern of consumption and the table manners of the aristocracy: bronze cauldrons for boiling meat, spits for roasting it, ladles and spikes to grab it, tripods to support pots over the fire, *kraters* for mixing wine and water, and all the other vessels required to serve the wine, including of course the drinking cups. Archaeological records corroborate what the texts and images say: attendance at banquets in common was one of the marks of belonging to the civic community.

Whether one focuses on the social phenomenon of the *symposion* and the importance of groups of men outside the family in the process of formation of the cities, or puts the emphasis on sacrifice and the values of sharing that are the image of the isonomy that operates in the institutions, the central role of banquets in the early days of the cities is clear. Several institutions and social practices demonstrated this. Banquets become standard institutions of the constitution (*politeia*) of certain cities, as in Sparta with the *syssition* or the *andreion* of the Cretan cities. Participation in these became a mandatory criterion for the recognition of citizenship. Similarly, a boy's entry into the adult world and his involvement in politics went hand in hand with his admission to the banquet. There is the famous example of the young Cretan who, at the end of the abduction marking his transition from adolescence to adulthood, received a gift from his lover of a cow, a cup, and a suit of armor, symbolizing the three new rights to which he had now acceded: the right to sacrifice, the right of feasting, and the right to fight for the city.

The communal meal in these cities was also a place of education. Most young people who did not yet have access to the common table nevertheless attended the meals of those who were citizens, the Equals or the Alike, and listened to them recount the exploits of their elders and their warlike valor. They also learned the hierarchy between the status of citizen and noncitizen, and integrated the inferiority of helots into their way of thinking and acting. The Spartan *syssition* was also a school of temperance, as recalled by Plutarch: "Children often attended these meals; it is as though they were brought to a school for temperance; there they learned about politics and attended to the amusements worthy of free men" (*Lyc.* 10–12).

Commensality was thus one of the structures of the identity of citizens among other communal activities. But bringing the community together in a large daily banquet is only possible in communities on a smaller scale.

The classical period

In the classical period (fifth to fourth centuries BC) public meals took on another aspect. In response to demographic development and the increasing

number of citizens, formulas for communal banquets of delegates were put in place; the whole community no longer ate together, but only some of its members, who thus served as delegates representing the community. This explains the communal meals of magistrates. In Athens for example, the *prytanes* ate together every day in the round building of the Tholos adjoining the agora. These 50 magistrates represented the city permanently for one-tenth of the year, during which time they received an indemnity for their food. This delegation process also explains the custom of cities inviting guests whom they wished to honor to dine with the communal group: these were the invitations to the banquet of the *prytaneum* that persisted throughout the history of the cities. It also explains the existence of true banqueting professionals: parasites, who were present in many rituals to represent the community.

Finally, one of the most important honors given by the city of Athens to the citizens in gratitude for their service to the community was the lifelong right to dine in the *prytaneum*: *sitesis*. The winners in the Olympic contest for example received this privilege.

Literary and epigraphic texts in Athens reveal the operation of large public banquets following sacrifices in the festivities in honor of the principal deities of the city. The organization of some of these banquets, such as during the *Panathenaia* or the *Dionysia*, was through a liturgy called *hestiasis*, which made one citizen per tribe responsible for the practical implementation of these gigantic and expensive meals that were preceded by sacrifices of hundreds of animals. Few texts allow us to imagine in a concrete fashion how these meals were held; the inscriptions tend to concentrate on sacrifices and the distribution of meat. An area on the outskirts of the city, bordering the neighborhood of Keramikos, seems to have allowed such gatherings. The building called the Pompeion indeed includes both a series of banquet rooms, insufficient to contain the entire civic population, but which could have been used by some magistrates and notables, and a large open space allowing installation of temporary structures, shelters or tents made of branches, beneath which the banqueters could dine; post holes bear witness to this practice.

However, the document that best conjures up the atmosphere of the festive gatherings is the description of the banquet offered by the hero Ion in the play of Euripides that bears his name, the text quoted at the beginning of the present chapter. The action is supposed to take place in Delphi, but the Athenian character of the entire plot cannot be doubted: it is the story of the son of Creusa and Apollo, who becomes king of Athens, succeeding his grandfather Erechtheus. This text is one of very few descriptions of public banquets transmitted by the literature of the classical period.

Like Ion, other prominent men in the cities, such as magistrates, could fund meals to which they invited all the citizens, as Cimon, Alcibiades, and Nicias

did in the fifth century. This kind of generosity was greatly appreciated by the citizens, and the Athenian politician Pericles saw the threat it posed to democracy and tried to oppose it. This proves that, apart from the redevelopments of commensality linked to the forms taken by political regimes, the invitation to the feast was a recurrent feature of the generosity of Greek social elites, and Hellenistic benefactors were carrying on this tradition.

Feeding the citizens in this way also provoked from the classical period the comment or even the criticism of writers who, like Aristophanes, mock a force-fed city that has lost its political resilience (*Knights*), or Pseudo-Xenophon (the Old Oligarch), who sees here the Athenian poor taking command of Athenian political life, at the expense of course of well-born Athenians. However, the thinkers who dream of an ideal city, and if possible one without conflict (such as Plato and Aristotle), make, in their different ways, the practice of eating one of the strongest social bonds. We see the intrinsic connection between a practice deeply rooted in religious and social habits and the evolution of political discourse in the Athenian city.

The Hellenistic World

Meals also suggest differences, between citizens and noncitizens, between men and women, between adults and youths, as the documents of the Hellenistic period show. For this period the epigraphic documentation is essential. The honorific decrees, civic regulations, accounts of sanctuaries, dedications, consecrations, foundations, in hundreds of entries from across the Greek world, allow for a complete description of the banquet.

Meal planning is known by regulations from the cities, which prescribe in detail what should be done, the persons responsible for holding banquets, and the foundations set up by individuals. It is thus possible to know the numbers of guests, and to obtain an idea of the cost of such events for the finances of cities and for individuals.

The inscriptions and archaeological data allow us to envisage the architectural framework of the meal: the banquet facilities, buildings and places in the city which could accommodate the guests (gymnasia, temples, agoras, ...), the place of banquets in the topography of the city, the necessary furniture. These meals could indeed take place anywhere; the public space of some cities like Priene was literally invaded by banqueters at major festivals, and private spaces sometimes lent a hand.

The menu: meat, grain, and wine are to be expected, but are nonetheless sometimes described with precision as to the quantities to be supplied to each guest. Variations based on the locality or on groups of guests related to different kinds of wine (sweet wine, *glukus*, was for women) or the

distributions that often accompanied these meals.

The Hellenistic world is rich in documents because the individuals who provided these meals were often the individuals that the city thanked in great prolix official statements. Around this centuries-old habit of communal eating of sacrificial meat on festive occasions, social and political change, in short the history of cities, unfolded. Benefactors exploited the excellent opportunity presented by the meal to strengthen social cohesion for the purpose of promoting social and political ends. They all occupied official positions – magistracies, priesthoods – and paid for these meals when they came into office or on already existing festal dates. Feasting the city had become part of the task of every politician, who thus ensured his fame during his lifetime and also recorded his name in the social memory after his death: the name of the benefactor would be proclaimed in the banquet to come.

Banquets were only one link in this chain of memory but an important link, not only because they outnumbered all other types of benefaction, but because they seized the civic body at a propitious moment for the formation of groups, that of jubilation, of celebration.

The guests, too, in the image of the cities of this period, were more open and less rigid in the shackles of political status. While citizens were always the first to be invited to dinner, foreigners in residence or passing through were also present, as were the Romans, then the inhabitants of neighboring cities. The opening, still tentative, of public meals to all freemen of a city reflected the birth of a new sense of community no longer based only on political rights, but giving way to solidarity born of common work and quotidian proximity. The barriers of sex and freedom remained, however: slaves and women were still mostly excluded from banquets.

This overly general picture might suggest uniformity throughout the Greek world. This was not the case. To begin with, the epigraphic documentation is not well distributed either in space or chronologically. Moreover, within the same city, when we are fortunate to have a detailed document, such as the great inscription for Kleanax at Kyme at the very beginning of our era, we see that practices varied from one party to another according to the divinities honored, and as a function of local customs that remain impenetrable to us. The citizens of Kyme participated alone in the laurel festival, but for a celebration in honor of the dead even slaves were invited. We must therefore avoid a monochrome picture and realize that the lack of documentation risks making an artificial unity of a varied reality.

Private benefactors often took over in cities no longer able to fund costly manifestations of cult. Some inscriptions hint at the importance of this charge in the life of a benefactor. Thus a certain Zosimos, citizen of Priene, invited the entire city to dine on the occasion of his accession to the *stephanophory* (magistrature) and again at a sacrifice to Zeus Keraunios: he distributed the

meat to the citizens, to neighbors, to residents, to foreigners, to Romans, and to slaves, and invited the members of the council (*boulê*) and magistrates to a banquet. He did this again at the Panathenaic festival. This form of philanthropy, popular with the masses, allowed benefactors to become known and helped bring them within the narrow group of city leaders.

The long history of Greek dining has interested antiquarian scholars wishing to bring order to a sometimes hectic past from the Greco-Roman period onward. Athenaeus and Plutarch thus wrote extensively about the practices of commensality, preserving with their citations numerous texts that describe these practices. However, while providing valuable material for future scholars, they also indicated their own reading of the long-term phenomenon of the banquet. For them there is no doubt: the Greek way of eating and drinking together is the standard of civilization in the face of the deviant customs of barbarians, and the present manner of doing so is superior to the past: the world of Homer, where they ate only grilled meat, sitting, was a primitive world! An anthropology and history of ritual banquets is thus created, which makes for a fascinating study.

Historiography

Research and publications on Greek dining have increased in the last 20 years. It is now possible to read a continuous history of this practice from the Mycenaean period to the end of antiquity, to know the characteristics of different cities, to identify different types of discourse, and clearly to mark the originality of the iconographic corpus, which, far from being an illustration of the practices of the banquet, is an independent construction of the Greek imagination.

The Mycenaean world opens the history of festivities through the study of the Linear B tablets but mainly thanks to recent excavations. The erudition needed to work on these early periods is coupled with a range of key issues in the eyes of historians: how to differentiate between banquets and forms of daily consumption, how to distinguish different types of banquet, how to understand the role of these festivities in Mycenaean society (*Hesperia* 73.2, 2004). The different categories of sources are ceramic tableware and bronze, often from tombs, the Linear B tablets that provide lists and prescriptions for the organization of feasts, the representations of banquets in wall paintings and pottery. One of the recurring features is the dual function of the banquet, both a unifying factor in the creation of a common identity and a divisive factor as a marker of social inequality.

In the Homeric world banquets find their place in an anthropological study of the system of gift and counter-gift (Scheid-Tissinier, 1994), and in the discussion on the origins of the *symposion* (Wecowski (2014); see Corner in the present volume).

Archaeology has enriched what can be said of commensality in the Geometric period and the early Archaic: the practice of dining was closely linked both to the rite of sacrifice and the establishment of communities (Schnapp Gourbeillon, 2002). Our knowledge of banquets in the world of Archaic and Classical cities has diversified through publications on dining at Sparta, Crete, Athens and other cities, and also through general studies of other places of the expression of commensality such as the *oikos*, kinship and family, and associations. The context of meals in the home and in the sanctuary is now better understood. Studies on the function of different parts of the *oikos*, and in particular on the place of the *andron* and the improbable *gynaecium*, stimulate our understanding of the space reserved for meals and of the further spaces of masculine and feminine activities beyond it (Nevett, 2001; Morgan, 2006).

The banquet has also been taken out of its isolation and placed within a larger ensemble, that of the pleasures of the flesh in democratic Athens, the amorous body meeting the gourmand body for a new cultural history (Davidson, 1997). Along a similar approach, of putting in perspective in a broad context, the meal can also become a place of observation of social and cultural phenomena that are not limited to table practices, and of understanding the relationships between rules and practices, norms and transgressions (Catoni, 2010).

Finally, the theme of the banquet has encountered other themes favored by research over the past 20 years, particularly gender. The feasts of women in rituals are better known, as well as the handling of wine by women in the Dionysian world. A critical reading of scenes on vessels allows us to challenge our habitual categories, such as public and private, male and female, and free and slave (Lissarrague, 2013; Schmitt Pantel, 2009a, 2011).

In short, the field of studies around the banquet, which does not separate the history of food from that of table manners, or the history of practices from that of discourse, is booming. The theme of the banquet is a formidable way to break into different fields of history, as this brief overview of recent research will have shown, as well as for pursuing personal trajectories. Oswyn Murray for example saw in the broad investigation he conducted into the *symposion* a way to write a page in the history of pleasure in the ancient world. For me the story of the banquet has primarily been a means to address political history in a new way. Cultural history is certainly the approach that inspires the most recent work; all this is the hallmark of an evolution and renewal of methods and questions in Greek history at which we can only be delighted.

FURTHER READING

For an up-to-date historiography of food and eating rituals in ancient Greece, read the work of Bruit Zaidman *et al.* (2004), Schmitt Pantel (2011, 2012),

and Nadeau, Lion, & Raga (2012).

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 22

Symposium

Sean Corner

Like the theatre and gymnasium, the symposium, the reclining banquet, was a hallmark of classical Greek civilization, both in the sense that the symposiastic form of banqueting was itself common and distinctive to the Greeks and in the sense that the symposium was home to a number of characteristically Greek cultural forms. A good deal of Greek monodic poetry was composed for performance at symposia. Much of the repertoire of vases, and the imagery that decorated them, was fashioned for use and display at symposia. The symposium was a chief site for pederastic courtship, and the defining venue of the courtesan. The importance of the symposium as a key locus for sociality and socialization – for male homosocial bonding, and the musical, intellectual, ethical, and social training of young men – was reflected in its place in literature, as a setting and theme for comic and philosophical drama and dialogue (most famously in Plato's *Symposium*).

Symposion was, properly, the name for the second part of the banquet, the drinking party that followed the dinner, the *deipnon*. In this respect, it is akin to the British dessert, when eating gives way to a distinct stage of ritualized convivial drinking. The tables of the banqueters, who reclined in a close circuit of couches (or on mattresses on the ground), were replaced by “second tables,” charged with fruits and sweetmeats to accompany the drinking (called *tragēmata*). With the meal cleared away, wine took center stage. In a Mediterranean society whose agriculture was centered on grape, grain, and olive, wine was a hallmark of agrarian civilization. Wine, *oinos*, was categorized as one of the three fundamental constituents of the Greek meal, together with *sitos*, grain, and *opson*, the catch-all category for whatever foods were served along with the *sitos*. To lack wine was a mark of savagery or barbarism. However, drinking unmixed wine was equally barbarous, and turned one savage or mad. The divine potency of Bakkhos had to be tempered for human use. The symposium ritualized the consumption of wine to make it safe, turning it to social ends: civilized drinking was symposiastic drinking. As with other occasions of commensality in Greece, the symposium was integrally a religious and social occasion. The transition from *deipnon* to *symposion* (see, e.g., Xenoph. fr. 1 West; Pl. Com. fr. 71 KA; Alex. fr. 252 KA; Ath. 692f–693f) was marked by a lustration, the donning of garlands, and libations and hymns to Dionysus, god of wine, Apollo, god of music, and apotropaically to Zeus Soter, who brought safety, Hygieia, the goddess Health, and the Agathos Daimon, a spirit of bounty and good fortune. The wine was diluted with water in that centerpiece of the symposiastic service,

the krater, or mixing bowl.

Mixing was the mark of moderation and self-mastery, of the temperance that symposiastic song and painting constantly enjoin as the convivial ideal: one should drink to overcome individualistic reserve and be amiable, but not so much as to lose control and become quarrelsome (see, e.g., Ath. 35c–40d and 427f–432d). The ethic of moderation went hand in hand with an ethic of mutuality and equality. All drank in one common circle, sharing the same food and same wine, drawn from the common mixing bowl. Provision for the feast was often made in common, with each individual contributing cash or victuals. And the enjoyment of another's hospitality came with the obligation to host in turn. To fail to contribute or reciprocate was to be a parasite (the term comes from the Greek name for the hanger-on at table, the *parasitos*), a figure of solipsistic selfishness and at the same time servile dependence. The proper symposiast was his own man, master of himself, but, as proper master of himself, could also be a true friend to his peers (see, e.g., Thgn. 467–96). The symposium was an occasion for the satisfaction of wants and desires and indulgence in pleasure, but required the individual to restrain himself in order to partake of common, convivial pleasure. Symposiastic discourse constantly inveighs against greed: one should moderate one's appetite so that all may share alike. So too all should participate equally in the common entertainment, taking turns at toasting, song-singing, speechmaking, or game-playing (but, in contrast to the British dessert, the direction of circulation was to the right, *epidexia*). Such symposiastic sport was highly competitive, but convivial protocols urged that emulation of one's peers should not descend into conflict and striving for superiority.

The question of salutary drinking, then, was implicated in an ethical and social question of the relationship of individual to group, and the symposiastic regulation of sociality – of appetite, drunkenness, sport, and intercourse – was concerned with the regulation of self in society, with participation in the male peer group. The presence of men outside the family required that women of the household be excluded, making the symposium an occasion for non-kin confraternity. As part of their passage from the world of the household into manhood, boys accompanied their fathers or lovers to symposia. Boys, like women, sat at meals. When a boy came of age, he assumed the right to recline, and to attend symposia in his own right. In keeping with its homosocial character, the symposium was a place of extramarital love, of pederasty and love of courtesans, who were called *hetairai*, “female comrades,” and who were admitted in an equivocal and ambivalent capacity: as honorary men, who could recline and participate in the circle of banqueters, participating as quasi-equals, but who remained at the same time objects of the men's sexual license, open, unlike citizen women, to use and abuse (most *hetairai* were slaves or freedwomen). The reception room, the *andrôn*, meaning “men's quarters,” was set apart within the house as a space for the

man to share in commensality and conviviality with his friends, bonding, outside the bonds of marriage and the productive relations of domestic life, in consumption and in the pleasures that were the prerogative of free men. Altogether, then, as I have argued, the symposium provided a social and sentimental education, a lived lesson in being a free man: a master of women and slaves, master of oneself, enjoying reciprocity with other men, sharing and competing with them, giving and receiving hospitality and participating in turns, regulating oneself so as share in equitable relations with one's fellows, and thus able to share in mutual relations of friendship and confraternity.

This distinctive form of conviviality arose during the archaic period (750–480 BC), and was a conspicuous feature of social life across the Greek world by the end of the sixth century. Its rise thus coincided with the rise of the *polis*. How the two developments are related is a central question for our understanding of the development of Greek society after the Dark Age. It is a commonplace of classical scholarship that the archaic period was an aristocratic period. What exactly is meant by this, however, is often underspecified, and currently there exists a variety of contending views about almost every area and aspect of archaic Greek society. As the editors of Blackwell's recent *A Companion to Archaic Greece* put it, "Nothing seems certain any longer in the study of Archaic Greece" (Raaflaub & van Wees, 2009).

The dominant view of the symposium, at least in English-language scholarship, is that of Oswyn Murray. It used to be thought that early Greek society was organized on a gentile basis: that is, on the basis of clans or tribes focused on and dominated by certain aristocratic lineages. Most scholars now believe that this was not the case. In the absence of such structures, however, it is not clear how aristocratic control of society might have been effected. For Murray, the answer lies in the symposium. In a society organized on the basis not of extended kinship groups but of non-kin social associations, the symposium was the key institution of an aristocratic social order. Banqueting was, in Murray's view, the preserve of the elite and the banquet the place in which an aristocratic social world was formed. In conviviality, aristocrats forged social bonds with one another and set themselves apart from the rest of society. Symposiastic banqueting was a form of conspicuous consumption by which aristocrats constituted themselves as a leisure class, enjoying a lifestyle of elegant pleasures. Lyric poetry and vase painting are artifacts of this lifestyle, expressive of the manners and mores of the symposium, which is to say of the dominant, aristocratic culture of early Greece, with its orientalizing and passion for refinement and luxury, its alluring courtesans and idealized pederastic love. With the rise of the *polis* and the broadening of political participation, however, the aristocracy was supplanted. The *polis* appropriated aristocratic commensality for its civic officers, instituted public dining, and absorbed many forms of commensal association into itself, as civic

associations. Thus, while symposia were celebrated in public messes (*syssitia*) and at civic festivals, the symposium proper (as Murray would have it) – that is to say, the exclusive, secular banquet – stood in opposition to the *syssition* and sacrificial feast. The symposiastic lifestyle now came to represent a withdrawal into elitist, private pleasures by an aristocracy displaced from the public sphere, and the symposium became a venue for the cabalistic, stasiotic politics of aristocratic faction. Thus, as Leslie Kurke puts it, the symposium was an “anti-city” (Kurke, 1999, 17–18).

As Pauline Schmitt Pantel observes, however, there are tensions in Murray’s model, in which the symposium is interpreted as an organ of domination over the *polis*, a private cabal opposed to the *polis* as a form of society, and an escape from the *polis* into private life. Schmitt Pantel, writing in the French structuralist tradition, argues that these tensions are predicated upon conceptual dichotomies – between public meal and private symposium, sacrificial feast and secular banquet – that are inapt for early Greece. She contends that, in the aristocratic *polis* of archaic Greece, there was no distinction between social life and public life. Rather, the *polis* was constituted by a network of elite sociality involving integrally all the different occasions and forms of commensality; these cannot be parsed according to a distinction between sacred and profane, which in the archaic city constituted a continuum rather than a dichotomy. If the division and distribution of sacrificial portions instantiated civic community in its aspect of equitable shareholding – where membership in the city was to have and do one’s share – then convivial drinking was an instantiation of the principles of civic harmony and common flourishing, and the symposium, like the *syssition*, was constitutive of the *koinon*, the common life of the city. With the broadening of political participation, the city was no longer co-extensive with aristocratic society and the political was increasingly separated from the social. The civic or public sphere became more autonomous and politics more abstracted from sociality, delimited to formal office-holding and the functions of government. On the other hand, as Schmitt Pantel observes, the Greek state never became fully autonomous. If other associations were now subordinated to political association, civic life continued nonetheless to consist of the ensemble of common activities of the groups that composed the city. Thus Schmitt Pantel grants that in the classical period elite symposiastic sociality could assume a private aspect, as being outside the state and inclusive of only a section of the citizenry, but holds that sociality was nevertheless not consigned to the sphere of private life: while it becomes meaningful, in the context of the classical city, to distinguish between civic dining and private commensality, the line between the two remained blurred.

In Murray’s vision (and that of most scholars), the symposium is quintessentially identified with the *andrôn* and *klinê*: the exclusive, private dining room, built to accommodate the elegant, luxurious eastern-style

banqueting couch. Symposia on the ground and in public sanctuaries thus represent a departure from, or appropriation of, the symposium “proper.” *Hestiatoria*, symposiastic banqueting rooms in sanctuaries, however, predate domestic *andrônes* in the archaeological record. Moreover, as has been stressed by a number of archaeologists recently, the archaic house was too simple to accommodate a dedicated dining room, and indeed too small to accommodate banqueting except perhaps in the courtyard (see Rabinowitz, 2009; Nevett, 2010; Baughan, 2011). Moreover, the literary and iconographic evidence suggests that, in the archaic period at least, symposia were most frequently held in the common space of the sanctuary, in *hestiatoria* or outside on the ground. The formal sanctuary and public temple were developments of the eighth and seventh centuries BC, and, as most scholars believe, central to the formation of the *polis*. I would argue that it is in this context that the symposium developed, originating in the practice of reclining on the ground for feasting in sanctuaries, moving onto couches in dining rooms in the sixth century, originally in *hestiatoria*, and only then, at the beginning of the classical period, spreading to *andrônes* in houses. This, then, conforms with Schmitt Pantel’s rather than Murray’s vision.

Moreover, whereas Lisa Nevett (2010, 62) speaks of the migration of the symposium in the classical period from the religious sphere to the private, domestic context, and Elizabeth Baughan (2011, 41) speaks of the classical symposium, in contrast to the archaic, as an “essentially private and noncultic institution,” I would argue that things did not fundamentally change. Writing about classical Athens, John Wilkins (2000a, 57, 178, 205 ff.) and Nick Fisher (2000) have cogently argued against the notion of the symposium as “the private banquet,” in contradistinction to the civic feast and public festival. The point may best be illustrated by reference to two comic episodes. In Menander’s *Dyskolos* (855 ff.), performed in 316 BC, a family celebrates a betrothal (in fact, a pair of betrothals) by holding a symposium at a local cave shrine of Pan and the Nymphs (in a tradition of picnic banquets at communal sanctuaries that, as I see it, goes back to the very origins of the symposium). In Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* (1085 ff.), performed just over a century earlier, the protagonist, Dikaiopolis, attends a symposium at the house of the priest of Dionysos as part of the festivities of the Anthesteria. Thus it is not only that the city constructed dining rooms and made provisions that guests and officers of the *polis* could enjoy symposia together, and that symposia accompanied sacrificial feasting during public festivals, but that even to speak of “civic” as opposed to “private” symposia is problematic: after all, in the *Dyskolos* we have a private feast, but it is held in a communal sanctuary, embedding the family occasion in the neighborhood and the wider community of the city, while in the *Acharnians* a banquet is held for select guests in a private house, but in the home of a civic priest, as integral to the celebration of a *polis* festival.

I have argued that the symposium, even when held in the home for a private occasion, implicated the household in civic community, mediating between household and *polis*. The *polis* was composed of households that were autarchic and yet together constituted an integral whole, the city. The freeman, master of himself, was governor of his household and protector of its interests, but at the same time joined in collective self-government with other citizens in the common, public interest. Intermediary between these two levels – the household and the city – was a network of non-kin confraternal associations, such as the *phyle* and *phratry*, official subdivisions of the citizenry, and various voluntary associations and groupings. Where household interests had an intrinsic tendency to competitiveness and divisiveness, such networks provided for the formation of social bonds and common identities beyond kinship, accommodating household interests to a common life in the *polis*. Where the *polis* in macrocosm was something of an abstraction, in its subassociations that life was concretely instantiated. Integral to this social networking was commensality, and the symposium was integral to this commensality, whether at home with friends in celebration of a victory in a civic contest (as in Plato's *Symposium*), at the local sanctuary in celebration of a betrothal between two families, at the house of the priest of Dionysus during the Anthesteria, among magistrates in the public dining rooms in the Agora, or at the town hall, the Prytaneion, for honored citizens and guests of the city.

The key issue here is that of exclusivity. The symposium was an occasion of homosocial fraternity, of *hetaireia*, and symposiastic *hetaireia* has tended to be understood by scholars in terms of the aristocratic political club. Yet the very symposiastic poetry, such as the songs of Alcaeus and Theognis, that places such emphasis on corporate solidarity also identifies the group with the city and figures the symposium as a *polis* in microcosm. Thus it is that Murray argues that the symposium was, in origin, an organ of aristocratic domination over the city, and later became an institution of aristocratic cabal, as in the case of the oligarchic political clubs that overthrew the democracy at Athens in 411 and 404 BC. As we have seen, Schmitt Pantel, pointing to the tensions in Murray's position, instead identifies the archaic symposium as a microcosm of the city, but of a narrowly aristocratic city. I share Schmitt Pantel's view that the symposium was a constitutive association of the city, but my view of the *polis* is closer to that implied in Murray's position, inasmuch as I would argue that the *polis*, even in the archaic period, and in its most exclusive form, was a broader citizen-state than the characterization "aristocratic city" will allow. Moreover, even if this is not granted, then it nevertheless remains unclear what relationship, in Schmitt Pantel's view, the symposium has to the city in the classical period (at least in cities with a broad franchise). I, then, part company with Schmitt Pantel on the very point about which she is in agreement with Murray (and indeed most scholars): namely, that the symposium was an institution of aristocratic exclusivity. Rather, I would argue that the symposium was a constitutive association of the city (and not

merely of an “aristocratic city”), but also reflected tensions endemic in the order of the *polis*.

As Fisher (2000; cf. 2002) and Wilkins (2000a, 65–66, 204–211) have argued, the evidence does not support the prevalent view that the symposium, in classical Athens at least (and most of our evidence for the classical symposium, as for classical Greece in general, is Athenian), was exclusive to the elite. In addition to enjoying symposia in the context of public commensality, non-elite Athenians held parties of their own. Comedy depicts ordinary Athenians (such as the everyman, Dikaiopolis) as engaging in and well acquainted with symposiastic revelry. Indeed, the allusions and references made in the plays to fine points of symposiastic protocol and practice, and the figurative use of the symposium as a basic strand of comic imagery and as a comic theme, presumes such acquaintance on the part of the audience. Bearing in mind that symposia could be more or less elaborate, that neighbors borrowed party equipment from one another, and that guests regularly brought their own cups to dinner in addition to contributions of food or drink, we can say that symposia were not beyond Athenians of moderate means (of course, the wealthy could afford more frequent and more fancy symposia). And given its commonness, and its sheer quantity, it seems that there was a broad market for symposiastic pottery. The plainer ware, at least, was presumably the sort of thing that would have been seen at “the symposia of the common market-folk” referred to in Plato’s *Protagoras* (347c). A century earlier, *andrônes* are already found in some of the more modest, as well as the larger, homes in the Peiraeus (which are some of the earliest *andrônes* yet found anywhere). And if the oligarchs of 411 and 404 hatched their plots around the mixing bowl, symposia were at the same time enjoyed by the members of the religious clubs and mutual societies, the various *orgeônes*, *thiasoi*, and *eranoi*, in which many Athenians participated and which were central to the common social life of the city.

This brings us back to the place of symposiastic sociality in the network of association that built bonds between and across households and so constituted the city. In my view, all symposia, even those exclusive to the elite, belonged to the order of the city in the sense that the rituals and discourse of symposiastic conviviality made banqueting into a lived lesson and sentimental education in citizenship. As I described at the beginning of this essay, symposiastic sociality was central to the socialization of men into adult male society. The rituals of conviviality regulated drinking according to an ideal of sociability in which a man retained his autonomy but, through moderate drinking, itself an exercise in self-mastery, put aside the reserve of sobriety and entered into the reciprocal and mutual relations of the male peer group, forming bonds of comradeship and confraternity outside of family and domesticity in the pleasures of male homosociality. The regulatory principle of moderation and self-mastery went hand in hand with a distributive

principle of equitable shares. All had an equal place in an undifferentiated circle, enjoying equal shares of food and drink, and taking turns, sharing equal responsibility for and participating equally in the common entertainment. Selfishness, greed, *hybris*, and excess were castigated as unconvivial vices. According to the symposiastic ideal, each should regulate himself – his competitive striving, his appetite, his drinking – to remain on friendly terms with his peers, share in common pleasures, and enjoy the pleasure of conviviality.

All this corresponds to what has been described as the “middling” ethic of the *polis*. The ideal citizen, like the ideal symposiast, was *metrios*, measured and moderate, a man whose autonomy, in the exercise of self-regulation, allowed him to enter into community with other free men, as “civic friends,” sharing in a common life. The citizen male governed his household – his women, children, and slaves – but shared in collective self-rule with his fellow citizens, taking turns at ruling and being ruled. To be a citizen was to receive and do one’s part, where civic participation was both a prerogative and a responsibility. Membership in the *polis* was conceived in terms of isonomic distribution: the equitable distribution of shares among the peer group who collectively constituted the *polis*, as a “citizen-state.” In symposiastic song, equitable conviviality is described in terms of common shares and equitable distribution *eis meson*, “into the middle.” Civic discourse employs exactly the same language in speaking of shares in the commonwealth of the *polis*. As peers, citizens competed with one another, and their emulous rivalry was a key engine of civic voluntarism. Striving for honor through service of the city, however, was set against divisive competition and selfish striving for gain and superiority. If the convivial banquet was a figure for the harmonious city, so, inversely, the bad symposiast corresponded to the bad citizen: a figure whose vices of *koros* (excess), *kerdos* (profit), *pleonexia* (greed), and *hybris* (overweening) were antithetical to the common life.

The tyrant was figured as a bad symposiast, whose excessive, uncontrolled appetite at table lead him to violate the justice and mutuality of the banquet, just as his appetite for power leads him to devour the city, overthrowing the citizen-state. The ideal citizen was a “middling man,” a *mesos*, a man of moderate means, inasmuch as poverty made men dependent on others, and so rendered them servile, whereas wealth tended to excess, making men greedy and overweening. That is not to say, however, that being rich or poor were in themselves bad; rather, it was lack of self-mastery that compromised a man as a shareholder in the city. Thus, in the ideology of the *polis*, all citizens, inasmuch as they were *metrioi*, possessed of the virtue of temperance, were, in ethical terms, “middling men.” The middling ideal, then, actually elided class difference among citizens, who could feel solidarity, despite differences in wealth, by virtue of sharing – in contradistinction to women, foreigners, and slaves – in the privilege of being citizen-males, belonging to the

exclusive, homosocial club of citizenship. So too symposiastic discourse constructed the symposium as a company of middling men. The symposiast, who was a true friend to his peers at table, was defined in contradistinction to the parasite, the hanger-on at table, who was a figure of selfishness and false friendship. The needy beggar and greedy politician could equally be presented as parasites since both were driven, in one case by hunger and the other by appetite, to live by flattery of other men, which was a slavish, womanly life. The parasite was a figure of want, departing from the middle, whether in the direction of deficiency or excess. Lacking moderation and masculine self-mastery, he was unable to participate in the convivial company on terms of true reciprocity and mutuality, incapable of sharing *eis meson*.

Thus the symposium's aspect as an institution of *hetaireia* is consistent with its being a microcosm of the homosocial men's club that was the city. The symposium was a constitutive association of the city, not only as a context in which bonds of confraternity were forged between men outside of kinship, creating social networks between and across households, but also inasmuch as the rituals and protocols of banqueting made the symposium into a model of civic association and turned convivial drinking into a practical ethical training in civic manhood. I would not deny, however, that the symposium was at the same time implicated in invidious distinctions within the *polis*, and could become a venue for sectarianism. Symposia may not have been limited only to the elite, but, then as now, most people would have mixed within their own social set. While the emphasis in the symposium was in fact not on conspicuous consumption, but on moderation (and, as I have argued, symposiastic consumption was not a mark of a life of leisure), symposia did nevertheless reflect class difference inasmuch as the wealthy could afford grander parties. The distinction was not between those who had symposia and those who did not, but the elite could disdain the conviviality of the lower classes, as Plato's reference to the "symposia of the common market-folk" attests. This is not a matter of opposition between symposium and city as alternative models of social order: elitist symposium versus middling *polis* (as Ian Morris, 2000, 155 ff. and Leslie Kurke, 1999, 17–18, 180 ff. have argued on the basis of Murray's model of the symposium). Rather, the tensions at play here are tensions endemic in the *polis*. The boundaries of citizenship in terms of socio-economic range, and the question of equitable distribution of shares among the citizenry across class, were contested in and between *poleis*, and this contestation was reflected in symposiastic discourse. The ethic of the Theognidea is middling, but the poems' vision of equitable distribution is certainly not democratic. Moreover, if it is misleading to think of symposia in terms of political clubs – as with dinner parties today, most "private" symposia were simply *ad hoc* gatherings of friends, and even when held by clubs were not normally venues for political faction – and if the solidarity of *hetaireia* was not intrinsically exclusive of or at odds with civic solidarity, if indeed civic fellowship was built from the camaraderie of closer, more

concrete associations, then nevertheless group loyalty could be in tension with wider community, and the subgroups of the city could, in certain circumstances, become sectarian. Thus the symposium could become a venue for civil conflict, for *stasis*, but it was not intrinsically a stasiotic institution, and *stasis* is, in my view, better understood in terms of tensions and contradictions intrinsic to the *polis* rather than in terms of alternative and opposite “elitist” and “middling,” aristocratic and civic, ideologies.

Indeed, as symposiastic conviviality offered a paradigm of civic association, so the tensions that the regulations of the symposium sought to manage corresponded to the tensions that had to be negotiated in the life of the city: tensions between individual and community, autonomy and interdependence, equality and distinction, household and confraternity, corporation and civic association. If the ideal symposium offered a model in microcosm of the harmonious city, the failed banquet was a paradigm of *stasis*. Symposiastic discourse is equally given to problematize as to idealize; it did not merely offer prescriptions but gave force to those prescriptions by exposing what was at stake, reflecting on the problems that gave rise to them. Thus symposiastic song and painting dwell on the problems of trust, greed, and self-interest, they are stalked by the figure of the false friend, they confront the symposiasts with the effeminacy and servility of excess, they imagine the collapse of conviviality into disorder and conflict, and they lament *stasis* in the symposium and in the city. And of course reality never neatly conforms to the ideal, and the ways in which practice falls short of the prescription reveal the very forces that the ideal exists to mold or constrain. As our sources abundantly attest, the symposiastic rule of moderation, whether in eating, drinking, sex, or speech, was by no means always observed. Competition among symposiasts could give rise to conflict, and symposiastic sociality could lead to anti-social disorder. Drunkenness was prone to riot and *hybris*. The balance between responsibility to one’s household and confraternity with one’s peers could be difficult to strike. Spending on symposiastic pleasures might be the ruin of a household, and a man’s commitments to his kin could set him against his comrades. So too, convivial corporatism could itself be a source of tension. The symposium identifies its interest with the interest of the city, but could also be a basis for interest groups within the city. Ideally the different associations of the city are united in the larger civic association, but difference could turn to division, and to contestation over the city.

This does not mean that the symposium was an “anti-city.” Rather, it is only to say that the symposium was implicated in the civic order and also in the tensions and contradictions endemic in that order. Such an account admits Schmitt Pantel’s central insight of the implication of symposiastic in civic association while at the same time accounting for its implication in differences and divisions within the *polis*, which aspect Murray puts at the center of his picture. And by offering a new approach to the symposium it offers at the

same time new vantage on the *polis*. As the Greeks well knew, much is at stake in convivial drinking. The symposium was a central institution of Greek society and culture, and our understanding of it is central to our understanding of the history of classical Greece.

FURTHER READING

Murray's account of the symposium appeared in a series of articles beginning in the early 1980s, but is best summarized in his essay "Forms of sociality" (1995). His most recent views are represented in his contribution to Blackwell's *A Companion to Archaic Greece* (2009). His edited volume, *Symptotica* (1990a), contains a seminal collection of essays by leading authorities. Other important collections on ancient dining include those by Murray & Tecusan (1995) and Slater (1991). Schmitt Pantel's book, *La cité au banquet* (2011 [1992]), presents a comprehensive treatment of commensality in the Greek city. Her essay in *Symptotica* (1990) summarizes her view of the symposium in relation to Murray's. James Davidson's *Courtesans and Fishcakes* (1997) treats the symposium in the context of the politics of desire in classical Athens, tracing the cultural politics of sexual and gustatory appetite in the democratic city. Kurke's view of the symposium as an elitist anti-city is most fully detailed in *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold* (1999); Morris's treatment of the rise of the *polis* in terms of competing elitist and middling ideologies is set out in *Archaeology as Cultural History* (2000). Fisher's challenge to the idea of an elitist symposium is argued in two recent articles (2000, 2002); Wilkins concurs in *The Boastful Chef* (2000a), his study of the discourse of food and dining in Attic Comedy. I have set out my own views in a series of essays: my 2010 and 2011 articles present my argument for the symposium as mediating between household and city and providing a sentimental education in citizenship; my articles in *Greece & Rome* (2012) and in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities* (2014) consider the place of symposiastic conviviality in the life of the city, as regards the various contexts of and occasions for feasting; and my article in *Phoenix* (2013a, 2013b) presents my reading of the discourse of parasitism.

CHAPTER 23

Royal Feasting¹

Konrad Vössing

The consumption of food by humans is at all times not mere sustenance, but is instead socially qualified, or even shaped by social structures. And of course, people in antiquity were also with political autocracy in the form of monarchy (although this term originally came from a polemical context) (Barceló, 1993, 104–6). From these two facts, the questions arise of whether and how a monarch's consumption of food, especially in scenarios of royal feasting, differed from his environment's and why such special forms developed – or failed to.

Already a first, cursory glance at the banquets of kings (which must ignore the difficulty inherent in pinpointing what an ancient king was exactly) shows that three of their general features were also characteristic of banquets of the elite: they show a large number of formalized elements, were situated in a semi-public sphere of limited accessibility, and took place in a community consisting of several participants.

The first two characteristics, formalization and visibility, are in fact almost trivial: if the king ate alone and without witnesses (which of course happened on occasion), this act was “asocial” in the respect that it possessed hardly any external referentiality and might not even become known to anyone. But whenever his consumption of food was visible, it was associated with a message and this statement about his person and his relationship to his environment then needed to follow a familiar code, if it was to be understood. It is therefore crucial to search for the origins of this code – was it more traditional and commonplace or dependent on specific situations, e.g. the concrete form of political leadership? This search can only produce results in precisely defined historical contexts, a fact that also applies to the third determining factor listed above, namely the ruler being surrounded by a specific society at dinner.

If we consider classical antiquity, four main types of ruler emerge for discussion here:

- the early Greek tyrant (seventh and sixth centuries BC)
- the Persian king (550–350 BC)
- Macedonian and Hellenistic kings (fourth century–30 BC)
- the Roman Emperor (30 BC–third century AD).

The Early Greek Tyrant (Seventh and Sixth Centuries BC)

Although we have no contemporary literary evidence for the banquets of early Greek tyrants in the seventh and sixth centuries BC, we can nevertheless be sure that their background was the communal meal of the aristocracy. It is of course true that tyrants had to achieve their sovereignty by breaking the aristocracy's opposition, but they did not do this by establishing or at least propagating (as did partly the tyrants of the fourth century) a new type of rule although allusions to Mesopotamian forms of representation which influenced apparently princely tombs in contemporary Etruria (see Kistler, 2001, for the funerary dinner) would have been possible. But this road has not been chosen: the structure of the *polis* was never abolished and the tyrant's power was purely *de facto* and lacked an ideological base. As a result, they continued to adhere to the traditional aristocratic lifestyle and spirit (although opposing aristocrats were of course often exiled). For the banquet, this meant that the tyrant dined together with his *hetairoi*, as had long been the rule in the "men's quarters" (*andrônes*) of rich households. Memories of archaic Greek kingship were occasionally evoked in the tyrants' self-representation, but lacked any distinctive substance. The personal character of tyrannical rule will undoubtedly already have induced contemporary enemies to accuse them of employing their wealth – which became visible during dinners – not for the sake of the community of the diners, but rather to enhance their personal comfort and cement their power.

Later sources pinpoint this issue by criticizing the excessive opulence (*tryphê*; see, e.g., Ath. 541f) of the tyrant's table. A particularly prominent case was Polycrates of Samos, whose court (see Hdt. 3.42s., 125) seems to have been influenced by eastern traditions. What we do not know however, is whether these reports might not already have been affected by the ideological distancing from the banquets of the Persian king, especially since it was generally assumed that there was a significant difference in opulence and splendor between west and east, particularly in the area of food and drink (Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1995; Miller, 1997, 188–217; Jacobsen, 2010) which could be directly ascribed to the difference between the forms of government (see, e.g., Isocr. 4.151: *tryphê* corresponds to servitude. For when Athenaeus tells us in the fourth century how Polycrates had tasty morsels imported from various countries and oceans (Ath. 540d), this conforms to the commonplace Greek idea of the banquets of the Persian ruler (see below).

The Great King of Persia (550–330 BC)

In the sixth century BC, the Greeks encountered, as part of the splendor of the Achaemenid court, a type of banquet that politicized the consumption of food in three ways: the place of the king could be singled out and positioned at a

distance from the rest of the diners; the sheer cost and richness of the menus likewise served to differentiate the king's table from those of his subjects; and finally the diverse origins of the foodstuffs from various parts of the empire reflected the extent of royal power. These three characteristics could work together to make visible the fundamental qualities of the Great King's rule: he alone was the true recipient of all tribute from his subject areas, which was assembled on his table, and, in the same way, he alone was authorized to redistribute it (Briant, 1989). Even the great men of his empire are recipients of gifts from the king, be they factual or symbolic, and thus live off the table of the king, who also assigned here – not least using the order of placing (Xen. Cyr. 8.4.4) – the immaterial goods such as honor and prestige.

We do not know enough about the Persian court to judge whether there may have been other forms of banquet that emphasized the unity of the aristocracy. What is sure is that specifically royal events transformed foodstuffs and their consumption into a symbolic demonstration of the Great King's power in such an ostentatious way that it came to dominate the perspective in the Greek sources (cf. Jacobs & Rollinger, 2010, 155–230; Wilkins, 2013b). Here also occurred (intentional or unintentional) misunderstandings of this function and of the representations of allegiances in Persia in general be it that the royal banquet was grotesquely exaggerated into a purposeful humiliation of all other diners (Ath. 152f–153a), or that the king was portrayed as a glutton, whose aim was unlimited indulgence (see, e.g., the *Persica* of Ctesias). Luxurious banquets appear as the negation of political unity, or even of society in general. One moved along the lines of tyrant-criticism, combined with a certain measure of contempt for the barbarian that began to arise in the fifth century BC and was increasingly hardened into fixed *topoi*; they can still be seen in Roman times (Solier, 2006).

Macedonian and Hellenistic Kings

For the Greeks, the most remarkable aspect of the Macedonian royal banquet consisted partly in the lavishness of the dining, i.e. the consumption of large amounts of meat (a northern Greek peculiarity in general, which must at least in part have been due to the much greater capacities for the breeding of livestock than in the south. In addition, Thracian and Macedonian kings were accustomed to binding large groups of followers to their persons by communal banquets. The core feature of these invitations was their asymmetry: the inviting ruler stood in opposition to a multitude of guests who – unlike the banquets of the Greek aristocracy that emphasized equality and reciprocity – were not able to return the favor of their generous host (Borza, 1995b; Vössing, 2004, 67f.; Kottaridi, 2004).

The conceivably fourth-century palace that has been excavated at Vergina (ancient Aigai) with its banqueting halls arranged around a central courtyard

that could accommodate hundreds of guests shows that the distribution of food was a crucial function of this residence (it is thus no surprise that the royal tombs at Vergina also contained silverware: Kottaridi *et al.*, 2011, 174–80, 233–7). Philip II (350–336 BC) seems to have used this opportunity to make politics with dinner invitations almost excessively (Ath. 435b–c), although one must bear in mind that our knowledge is at least partially distorted by the hostile views held of him by some Greek authors.

One must note however that he certainly took care to maintain the equality among his peers in the Macedonian aristocracy and seems, for example, to have accepted invitations from them (see Plu. *Mor.* 707b). The traditional rules of these warrior banquets were thus upheld (Ath. 18a). The structure of the royal banquet was also by no means characterized by a total emphasis on the monarch, as it was in Persia. While the number of guests was of course quite extraordinary by comparison with the numbers that attended the banquets of ordinary Macedonian aristocrats, the groups of diners were not arranged in a centralized manner that focused entirely on the king, but conformed to the arrangements of a traditional Greek symposium. Even the king himself reclined among the other symposiasts without being accorded a special position.

This changed in the course of the Macedonian conquest of the eastern world, beginning in 334 BC. From Alexander (336–323 BC) to Cleopatra VII (52–30 BC) the rulers were in a position to choose from a number of traditions when it came to arranging their symposia. Although the ruler's special position was always part of these occasions, it was often staged in quite different ways, with the two ideological extremes being the traditional communal meal of the Greek *hetairoi* and the monarchical banquet in the Eastern style. Already Alexander the Great had used both forms (Borza, 1995a; Vössing, 2004, 72–92). Also for him, banquets were a tried and trusty political tool that enabled him to communicate certain messages to his peers. This is not only true of the first phase, in which he acted as a proper Macedonian king (who traditionally dined among his generals or, as a Macedonian king might traditionally do, invited his entourage and his allies: Diod. Sic. 17.16.4), but also of the second, during which he (as “king of Asia” from 331 BC onwards: Plu. *Alex.* 34.1) integrated or adapted eastern traditions on various levels, including for example attire and court ceremonies (see Pearson, 1960, 53); this went so far that Alexander attempted to force his Macedonian and Greek entourage to pay homage to him by *proskynesis*, the customary prostration before the Persian king and his divine protective spirit. Although this attempt ultimately failed, it is interesting to note that it took place during a banquet (Vössing, 2012).

Also Alexander's successors in Macedon and the other parts of his empire (that had been broken up even faster than it had been conquered) in Egypt, Syria, Persia, and Asia Minor, who called themselves at first diadochi and then “kings” after 306/5 BC, were, as was mentioned above, in a position to

choose among a number of possible models for the organization of their banquets, as there was no longer a binding tradition – in fact this was true of court ceremony in general.

Possible models were the following.

- The traditional Greek symposium with its emphasis on spontaneity and equality.
- Inviting the entourage to participate in the king's meal, as was practiced by the Macedonian king.
- The Persian royal banquet with its exaltation and isolation of the ruler, who guaranteed the prosperity of the empire, which had in turn to supply the demands of his table.
- The feasts of Alexander, who had already begun to use and even combine the various other forms.

Which of these traditions was preferred in each particular case depended on the varying situations of the new Hellenistic kingdoms. Their divergence becomes apparent already by comparing just the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires – while the first was organized centrally around capital city and heartland, the latter was less tightly knit, multicentric, and often at least partly controlled by means of indirect rule. As far as the banquet was concerned, the shared cultural identity of the diners, which allowed them to style themselves the elite in opposition to the barbarians, was of course completely unimportant in Macedon, but played a part in the kingdoms that were characterized by the opposition between a small Greek upper class and the indigenous population. Conversely, the palace courtyard at Aigai (Vergina) with its ring of banqueting halls – a visible expression of the Macedonian king's duty to feast with his entourage on certain occasions – seems, to our knowledge, to have been without parallel among the Seleucids and Ptolemies. As a whole, however, our knowledge of the banquets in the individual kingdoms is far too uneven and prevents us from tracing their varying historical circumstances in correlating differences in the organization of their symposia.

It is however perfectly possible to find informative evidence for some of the enumerated types (Vössing, 2004, 133–52). The Seleucid king Antiochus IV, for example, invoked the “dinner of equals” during a vast festival at Daphne (166 BC) and personally ushered individual guests to their places, raised his glass to them, participated in dances, and so on (Plb. 30.25f.). He evidently wanted to counter Aemilius Paullus' victory celebrations after Rome's triumph over the last Macedonian king, Perseus, and Rome's claim to hegemony in general. The staggering expenses necessary for this feast of the masses were partly covered by his “friends.” After all, the king's community with his “friends” had originally been a dining community, comparable to those shared by those with power and their *hetairoi*. The importance of the

banquet for this close relationship becomes clear when we consider cases in which the king sent a distant ally or acquaintance golden tableware on occasion of his being granted the status of “friend” (1 *Macc.* 11.58; see Plu. *Cleom.* 37.2) – an act that made him the king’s guest, even if he never actually saw him face to face.

While this instrumentalization of the amicable and spontaneous dining community certainly presupposed the expectations and associations attached to the “old” symposium, it also simultaneously disintegrated them. For the actual guests at the king’s table were by no means particularly honored solely by their participation in this dining community, quite the contrary: while Alexander had still accepted invitations by his *hetairoi* (Plu. *Alex.* 23.10; Arr. *An.* 7.25.1), a Hellenistic king dined, as far as we know, exclusively in his palace, and therefore his guests could be described as “parasites” (*parasitoi*). Usually this term was used to deprecate people (in the same way as “flatterer” does) who constantly dined at other people’s houses without repaying the favor (Wilkins, 2000a, 64–86). But at the king’s table, all other participants now became “parasites,” with the result that the term lost its negative connotation – at least in part. It remained in use however, in the same way as the literary sources maintained the traditional categories of commensality even though the reality of the monarchical banquet had in fact long overtaken them.

Its innovative characteristics nevertheless clearly communicated the new form of the monarchy: there were attendants and officials (e.g. the court official in charge of issuing invitations, the king’s food taster, and the so-called *edeatros*, the highest court servant) that only existed here and were structured by a system of titled ranks that could also be granted as honorary titles: the office of “royal cup-bearer” was a universally coveted position of intimacy, just as it had been at the Persian court (Vössing, 2004, 167–71), and it did not need to have anything to do with actual attendance at the table. The fundamental prerequisite for this development was that waiting on the ruler was by no means considered the task of slaves, but was also desirable for the upper class – quite unlike the situation at the banquets of the Roman emperors.

At dinner, the king often occupied an elevated, central space with the seating arrangements focused on his person and dependent entirely on him (Vössing, 2004, 123–9). Furthermore, the extraordinary size and lavishness of the royal banquets were signs of an explicit and prominent claim to sovereignty.

It is also the case here that the reflections of this practice found in Greek literature often revolve around the moralizing category of excessive opulence (*tryphē*), the respective judgments having already been tried and tested on the banquets of tyrants and Persian kings (Bernhardt, 2003, 22–30, 124–31). The sources collected by Athenaeus in his 4th and 12th books almost all show this perspective, in combination with a self-image shaped by Greek simplicity and

modesty; the *deipna basilika* (with the exception of the Macedonian king's) are all portrayed as decadent and disturbingly alien. In the case of the Ptolemies, one can show however that the usual judgment by the Greek sources, namely that all Egyptian kings after Ptolemy III (246–222/1 BC) were tainted by self-indulgence and luxury (Str. 17.1.11; see also Plb. 39.7.7; Plu. *Mor.* 52d–e), misinterprets their modes of self-representation (Heinen, 1983). Luxury and splendor were signs of a ruler's ability and power (see the epithet “tryphōn” borne by some Ptolemies) and of the prosperity of his kingdom, and thus they could not possibly be limited (Demetrius as *antisophistês*, see Heinen, 1983, 104f. above; Potheinos, see p. 90 above). It is also possible that aspects of religious ruler-worship were of importance here, especially in the context of the cult of Dionysus, who had become the protector and mythical ancestor of the Ptolemaic dynasty (Koenen, 1993).

One must note that royal banquets in general were by no means dominated by stabilizing messages with consistent content and direction that were received by all participants, be they actively or passively involved. This was impossible, simply because, as an institution, the symposium had both a long history and a cultural charge that obstructed rather than facilitated autocratic appropriation. Furthermore, the kings themselves, as was mentioned above, fell back on the egalitarian ideology of the symposium from time to time. In their palaces (Nielsen, 1999), there was not only one type of banqueting hall, but possibilities for a wide spectrum of commensality. However, even when the asymmetry of these social relationships, the unattainable riches, and the incredible power of the monarch were to be presented at a banquet, the addressees of this message were not without means of their own. Those who were present in person were of course limited, with the exception of willful dissimulation, to the (life-threatening) demand for sympotic “freedom of speech” (*parrhesia*); but at a safe distance, especially as critics of royal behavior in a literary world, they could paint those with power as ostentatious, they could paint those with power as ostentatious, unrestrained, or even feeble – in short, as deviating from the norm of traditional banqueting behavior. We know little about the success rates of such resistance. It was probably crucial that the “dissidents” were able to evade their king; for not only the contradictory variants of royal dining ideology prevented it from attaining consistent focus and force, but also the multitude of competing Hellenistic courts.

For the Romans, however, the evaluation of the feasts held by the Hellenistic kings was completely unambiguous: there was only one word that could be considered as a translation of *tryphê*, and its connotations were entirely negative: *luxuria*.

The Roman *Princeps* (30 BC–Third Century AD)

Generally speaking, one might say that the banquets of the Roman *nobiles* of the late Republic were the heirs of Hellenistic convivial culture (which was of course the origin of the Roman dining room, the *triclinium*). The royal court and its manners, the *mos regius*, were – just like the rest of the kosmos of the eastern kingdoms – politically more or less shunned, not least because of memories of the kings of Rome (Livy 2.3.2–4). The banquets of the emperors therefore need to be seen in the context of the *convivium* of the Roman elite, which was shaped in part by this opposition between cultural and political influence. Banqueting habits can not only reflect social realities, but just as well obscure them: and it is not uncommon, as in the case of the Roman *convivium*, for both these things to happen at the same time. While it was almost completely shaped by Hellenistic predecessors and models on the material level (ranging from the dining couches to table manners to the forms of conversation), it nevertheless expressed Roman social structure and its patronage relationships (Dunbabin & Slater, 2011, 444–57; Vössing, 2012), into which it then introduced a tendency to the contrary, namely the traditional ideal of sympotic equality.

The fundamental question that a modern analyst of the *princeps*' banquets must ask himself is therefore whether the emperors dined in any specifically “imperial” way. In other words: did they employ or develop unique forms of banqueting to express their special status, for example by borrowing from the royal feasts of the Hellenistic kings? The short answer is that an appropriation of such Hellenistic structures never happened, either at the beginning of the principate, or during its further development. That the end of the last great Hellenistic kingdom in 30 BC coincided with the beginning of permanent monarchical rule by Roman emperors should not, in this context, be taken as a marker of continuity. Concretely speaking, Octavian could have taken Cleopatra's captured tableware (Vössing, 2004, 121–3) for use in his own dining rooms, but he never did (Suet. *Aug.* 71.1), for the *convivium* of the Roman emperors obeyed other rules. Here a hierarchically superior or even central status of the host is generally lacking. Instead, the emperors remained (more or less willingly and gracefully) bound by two principles: the first was that the *convivium* belonged to the sphere of relaxed conviviality (*otium*) that specifically excluded demonstrations of a political nature, and the second that the banquet was the area in which the principal equality of the senators was to be maintained. For they were not clients or parasites, but *conviviae* with equal rights, and in order to preserve this form of “living together,” the emperor was bound to accept invitations from others on a regular basis. These reciprocal invitations by senators alone already prevented the banquets given by the emperor from becoming a separate institution with fixed forms and idiosyncratic principles, as these would have been subject to constant breaches.

A detailed analysis of these banquets (Vössing, 2004, 533–43) has also shown

that they differed only marginally and gradually from those given by the upper class. This applies to the invitation itself, the furnishings, the seating arrangements, the food, the entertainment, and the service personnel. Tendencies to the contrary are traceable from the second century AD onwards, especially since the time of Hadrian, but they remain cautious and curiously tentative: this was certainly an area in which the ideology of the principate was challenged. For a Roman senator, dining with the emperor, maybe reclining on the same couch, and inviting him in turn was a symbol of shared sovereignty, however large the gap between the “partners” may have been in reality. The banquets with senators had to carefully conceal what was obvious elsewhere: the massive difference in power between the *princeps* and his peers.

A look at the terminology is telling here. The emperor held *mensa regia* only in the same (metaphorical) sense in which any Roman *patronus* did, who fulfilled his clients’ expectations by inviting them to dinner: he was their *rex* in this situation. In a political sense however, an affirmative usage of this term was quite out of the question due to the various antipathies felt by the Romans in relation to old Roman and Hellenistic kingship. There was no established term that emphasized a specific quality of the emperor’s dinners, with the exception of the language of epideictic poetry, which overtly – and fictitiously – spoke of the *mensa domina* or the *cena sacra* (Stat. *Silv.* 4.2.5f.). Otherwise, it was characteristic of the *princeps*’ banquet that it never claimed to be more than a “normal” banquet given by an upper class patron.

This does not however exclude the senators from possibly accusing an unpopular emperor of such intentions after his death. An example is provided by the banquets of Domitian (81–96 AD), which modern scholars often identify as a turning point in the history of the imperial banquet, mainly because Statius and Martial describe them as “banquets worthy of Jupiter” and the younger Pliny conversely portrays them (after the Emperor’s death: *Pan.* 49.5f.) as model examples of tyrannical oppression. There are however no other indicators that suggest an actual reorganization of imperial receptions. One must of course note that Domitian had a “palace” built on the Palatine (Royo, 1999; Wulf-Rheidt *et al.*, 2007) with a dining room that spanned three floors and pushed the standard forms of the triclinium beyond all bounds. However, Domitian did not occupy an isolated and distanced place in the raised apse that would have allowed him to lord over the festivities and intimidate his guests (in this vein see, e.g., I. Nielsen, 1998, 126, 129; Zanker, 2002, 114) – instead he presented himself as a traditional host. This was not the area for an emperor to distinguish himself from his peers: he did that in his function as the patron of the citizens and expressed it by donating large banquets to the public (*cenae publicae*), which he came to monopolize more and more during the first century (Vössing, 2010).

Of course the emperor could only afford to hide so much of his factual

superiority at dinner, because his status was, in principle, unchallenged and invulnerable. While this says nothing about the degree of institutionalization of imperial rule, it does provide an insight into the ways in which the emperor made it visible, that is, it tells us about the forms of behavior specific to the court. The imperial *convivium* was not isolated but connected to other areas that typically belonged to a “court”: it took place in the palace, was performed with imperial furnishings and equipment (*instrumentum*), and assembled the emperor’s “friends.” In all these areas, it was not before the 2nd century that a process of transformation shaped the house of the Emperor into a social structure that was fundamentally different from aristocratic “houses.”

If we now reconsider the banquets of the Hellenistic kings in this context, other differences become apparent. It would never have been possible in Rome (as it was in Macedon and even occasionally at the Ptolemaic court) that the sons of the upper class functioned as servers at the ruler’s table. Equally impossible was the development of honorary titles such as “cook,” “cup-bearer,” or “food taster” out of banquet-specific services. All service at the emperor’s *convivia* was provided exclusively by slaves or freedmen, as was the custom at the aristocratic banquets with which the guests were familiar. The object of celebration was not an institutionalized intimacy with the ruler, but a shared feeling of belonging to the “happy few” who could enjoy their *otium* in relaxation, as well as the emperor’s promise that he would not seek to interfere with this community. The basis of this right to participate lay outside the apolitical sphere of dining hall and palace: it consisted in the traditional criteria of achievement that were based on class (*ordo*) and offices. This explains why an explicit demonstration of the emperor’s superiority and power on a political or even religious level was hardly possible during his banquets.

It would be wrong to assume that these clear rules rendered the emperor’s *convivia* an unproblematic, relaxed, and recreational form of conviviality. This had not even been true of the aristocratic *convivium* of the Republic, because Roman banquets were closely connected with social dependencies (Vössing, 2012) and the constant competition among aristocrats. This had little to do with sympotic equality, even though the old forms continued to be in use.

The emperor’s banquets picked up these tensions and intensified them by adding in the paradoxical status of the emperor himself. For the “normality” of dining with the emperor that was outlined above was clearly based on an illusion: de facto, the emperor was almost entirely outside the society of his peers (even more so than the Hellenistic kings had been, who had always been forced to acknowledge the competition of other dynasties), and, while this of course made his banquets unique, this fact could never be openly and explicitly expressed. This forced the emperor to maintain a difficult balancing act that often overburdened the tact and empathy even of benevolent

emperors. On the one hand, he could not fall behind his peers in matters of luxury, but on the other hand the accusation of “kingly” opulence and splendor was never far away, and bordered on that of “tyrannical” extravagance. Moreover, in general, the emperor had to take into account that his banqueting – as a token of his relationship with the aristocracy – was always carefully observed and evaluated. Another factor was that some emperors intentionally breached this delicate arrangement and openly exhibited their superiority. The guests were then completely at the emperor’s mercy, as there were no formal rules that would have allowed them to gain distance.

Conclusions and Further Development

Although Late Antiquity, or, more specifically, the Byzantine court, saw the development of the forms that we have failed to trace in the first centuries of the Roman Empire, namely specific terminology in combination with religious exaltation, strictly formalized procedures, which are reminiscent of Christian liturgy (and not by chance), an emphasized and secluded place for the emperor, and a special status for those people who were regularly invited to share the emperor’s table, one should not overemphasize this ostensible discontinuity. The aristocratic hierarchy of Late Antiquity originated neither from court ranks, from proximity to the emperor, nor from participation in his dinner parties, but from a ranked hierarchy that ultimately went back to the traditional value system of the senatorial aristocracy. An invitation by the emperor is simply a reflex that resulted from this core.

This brings us to an important difference between the Roman imperial banquet and the later banquets of European kings. All of the latter had a tendency to gradually “ennoble” their participants in the same way as the Hellenistic banquets had done, that is, by granting them the specific quality that the Romans had considered the prerequisite for participation through intimacy with the ruler. This peculiarity can probably only be explained by the exceptional tenacity of the Republican aristocracy, which continued to pass on its values and political principles even after it had long since ceased to exist.

However, a second difference between all ancient banquets given by rulers and the later court cultures is no less fundamental. The latter ennobled their diners by means of a (factual or perceived) transfer of culture from top to bottom. The banquets of the Greek kings and Roman emperors on the other hand were not only fundamentally indebted to objective traditions that far predated them, but all participants were also conscious of this dependency as it was constantly refreshed in their minds. The Greek symposia and Roman *convivia* existed as convivial meals of citizens long before and long after kings and emperors appropriated them. Demonstrating splendor and opulence,

and ostentatiously surpassing those living at the bare minimum, was not invented by the courts of kings, but was only picked up and continued by them (Nero was taught by Petronius, and not vice versa: Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.2; Plu. *Mor.* 60d). Not even the dinner parties of rulers could really change the aristocratic and civic dining traditions of antiquity.

FURTHER READING

As far as we know, there was no single ancient text that dealt primarily with the ruler's eating habits; our knowledge of Greek and Latin "mirrors" for kings (Schulte, 2001) is unfortunately very fragmentary. In the case of so-called symposium literature (Hug, 1932; Martin, 1957), the antiquarian subgenre, which may have developed out of learned conversations during dinner "at court," is of particular importance. Its most important representative is Athenaeus of Naucratis (Braund & Wilkins, 2000), who published his work *Deipnosophistai* (*Sophists at Dinner*) soon after 192 AD. The fourth book of this work is characterized by the traditional opposition between "ancient Greek moderation" and "barbarian opulence," unfortunately without applying any real historical interest. For the banquets of the Byzantine court, the most important source is the so-called *Book of Ceremonies*, which is however of post-antique date (Treitinger, 1938; Cameron, 1987; Kresten, 2000).

As far as modern literature is concerned (see most recently Grandjean *et al.*, 2013), the extent of scholarship generally corresponds, as one might expect, to the amount of source material available: while the historical tradition both on the Greek perspective on royal banquets of the old orient (Bowie, 2003; Jacobs & Rollinger, 2010, 39–65) and the dinners of the Achaemenids (Briant, 1996, 297–309; 1989; Kistler, 2010) is very limited, the festivals of Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors (Vössing, 2004) are far better documented. The late antique imperial court (Winterling, 1998; McCormick, 2000) and its banquets have also been accorded the attention due to the available source material (Malmberg, 2003, 179–219: Sourcebook).

NOTE

1 Translated by Henry Heitmann-Gordon.

CHAPTER 24

Roman Dining

John F. Donahue

Introduction

“We should look for someone to eat and drink with before looking for something to eat and drink.” This statement is attributed to Epicurus, a Greek philosopher of the third century BC and the founder of Epicureanism, a philosophy whose purpose was to attain freedom from fear and pain. To be sure, “looking for something to eat and drink” is the most vitally important task of any society. This was especially true in the pre-industrial communities of the ancient Mediterranean basin, where any number of factors might adversely affect the food supply. First and foremost, however, for Epicurus it was not “what” but “with whom” one ate. In the Greek world this belief found ample expression in the *symposion*, the aristocratic drinking party well known in Epicurus’ time (Corner in this volume); and it was particularly true among the Romans, who keenly understood that the ease with which food and drink could be shared among any number of diners also brought into play issues of hierarchy, status, and control, all notions that were essential to the formation of Roman identity (Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 39–78; D’Arms, 1984).

This essay will focus on the “what” but especially on the “with whom” aspect of the Roman dining table during the Imperial era. We shall begin with a brief review of the ancient diet and then examine Roman dining by type in order to illuminate the scope and the essential nature of this experience. In the process, we shall explore a wide range of evidence, including the emperors’ banquets at Rome, community feasts, and celebrations connected with the life cycle. We will conclude with a brief study of food and drink in specific contexts within the Roman military, an organization whose size and hierarchical arrangement will help to bring into sharper relief many of the complexities of food dynamics during the first four centuries of the Common Era. In all of this, the variety and flexibility of the Roman dining experience will be unmistakable, as will be the reality that one’s place at the table typically reflected one’s position in the wider world.

A Brief Overview of the Roman Diet

The Roman diet is commonly labeled as “Mediterranean” in that it relied primarily on foodstuffs native to this region. Three items were especially popular – cereals, vines, and olives – the so-called “eternal trinity” of the ancient dietary regimen (Garnsey, 1999, 12). The breads, wines, and olive oil

produced from these foodstuffs remained the essential components of the ancient diet throughout the Greco-Roman period. Bread ranged widely in type and quality, from simple porridge to more finely milled varieties (Wilkins, Harvey, & Dobson, 1995, 6–100); wine was a staple beverage widely grown and traded and the object of a specialized literature on viticulture (McGovern, 2003; Tchernia, 1986). Furthermore, both wine and olive oil provided important health benefits that are now widely recognized, while grain, which may have accounted for as much as 75% of an individual's caloric needs, remained a reliable source of food energy. Additionally, legumes, garden vegetables, herbs, condiments, nuts, honey, and fruit, especially figs, were also consumed, underscoring the variety of foodstuffs available in the Mediterranean region. Less widespread was beef, owing to the centrality of crop raising over pasturage throughout much of the region (Garnsey, 1999, 16–17, 122–7; Frayn, 1995). On the other hand, pork, especially sausage, was more common. Seafood was most popular among those with access to the water, and a steady source of profit could be found in certain products such as fish sauce (*garum*), which remained a very popular export throughout the Roman period (Curtis, 1991). At the same time, we find a Roman mindset that displayed high levels of ambiguity and anxiety over fish, fishermen, and the sea in general (Purcell, 1995). Most importantly, the foodstuffs described here were not to be found everywhere. In fact, recent approaches have examined food and food access with a high level of sophistication, arguing that the Mediterranean basin is best understood as a collection of micro-regions, each of which differed in its ability to produce food but all of which were subject to the element of risk associated with such a diverse and unpredictable environment (Horden & Purcell, 2000, esp. 175–230).

While the components of the Roman diet are well attested, we are less well informed about the effectiveness of these foodstuffs in meeting basic nutritional needs. It is difficult to know, for example, if the ancients consumed enough grain to meet basic energy and protein requirements and if there was enough dietary balance to make up for any deficiencies (Garnsey, 1999, 43–61). It is equally clear that access to food played a critical role in determining one's chances at obtaining adequate nourishment. Those who lived in Rome and who had the financial means were able to benefit from large-scale markets and a remarkably well-developed grain supply system (Aldrete & Mattingly, 2010). The philanthropy of the emperor, in the form of free benefactions that often included food and drink, was also a fixture in the imperial capital (Veyne, 1990). These features, which represented political responses to the challenges of keeping large numbers fed in order to maintain peace within the city, were simply not available to rural dwellers, for whom subsistence farming remained the norm. Here, the ability to eat adequately or to produce a surplus in a given year was never guaranteed, and we may suppose that food procurement and the threat of food shortage remained constant sources of anxiety.

A Melange of Roman Meals

To understand Roman dining it is necessary first to learn something of how the Romans themselves conceived of this activity. Accordingly, it will be useful to survey the evidence for three of the most common forms of dining to emerge from the sources during the Imperial period, as well as some of the most important social and political meanings encoded within these meals.

The diversity of the cena

The main meal of the day, the *cena*, was eaten in the late afternoon or early evening. We must be careful to think of this meal not in the modern Western sense of the evening dinner shared exclusively by family members but as a more fluid arrangement, which might include the entire family or simply the head of the household with or without invited guests. We are not especially well informed about the details of the family *cena*, partly because it would have depended on any number of variable circumstances on a daily basis but also because eating frequently occurred out of doors, especially in larger cities where housing conditions could be cramped and dangerous. This reality helped to account for the popularity of *thermopolia*, neighborhood bars that sold food and drink that could be easily consumed on the premises, as indicated by the widespread remains of these establishments at Pompeii and Herculaneum (Beard, 2010, 225–33; Laurence, 2007, 92–101). We would also like to know more about food allocation within the household (*domus*) at mealtime. The Roman emphasis on status and power surely would have favored adult males as heads of the household, yet the needs of women and children surely demanded attention as well. The picture is further complicated by the fact that the best sources on this issue are ancient medical writings, which often reflect a basic ignorance about nutrition. At best, we can say that food allocation within the family reflected concerns with social hierarchy but practices must have varied, with the issue perhaps becoming most critical in times of food shortage (Garnsey, 1999, 100–12).

We are on more secure footing concerning the *cena* involving the host and his invited guests. Indeed, the literary sources, with their focus on the Roman elite, and archaeological remains of dining rooms (*triclinia*), such as those preserved among the residential *villae* of Pompeii, leave us very well informed about the social realities of the *cena*. Most notable is that attendees ate by reclining on their left elbow upon dining couches, while taking food from a serving table with their right hand. The reclining posture itself was restricted to those of high social position and has been connected to a host of issues, including gender roles, sexual values, and relations among slave, freed, and freeborn (Roller, 2006). Furthermore, with three diners to a couch and

typically three couches to a room (hence the term *triclinium* for dining room), seating arrangements were of paramount importance. The guest of honor assumed a special place on the middle couch to the immediate right of the host, while the rest of the diners reclined according to a scheme that placed each “above” or “below” one’s companions. This arrangement reinforced notions of hierarchy and competition, while providing an opportunity for both the host and his guests to enhance their personal status and reputation. (see Stein-Hölkeskamp in this volume) Finally, strict rules of etiquette required that each diner wear a dinner toga, eat decorously with his fingers, partake in pleasant conversation, and appreciate the entertainment that was often provided, whether readings, mimes, entertainers, or acrobats. The diners themselves were typically male, although women and children could be invited (Bradley, 1998, 36–42).

Clearly, the *cena* had the potential to be far more than a simple evening meal. In the hands of a clever host it helped to encode a set of values that formed the basis of interactions among Roman elites while providing the modern reader with a useful barometer for measuring social relationships in ancient society. On the other hand, such careful attention to dinner decorum might just as easily be lampooned. Petronius’ *Cena of Trimalchio*, famously adapted for the screen by Fellini, records the remarkable dinner once provided by the parvenu Trimalchio to a motley crew of invited guests. Petronius’ tale represents complex satire, not meant to capture faithfully the everyday reality of Roman culture (Donahue, 1999). Even so, the egotistical host, the extravagant foods, the boorish guests, and the ridiculous entertainments perhaps provide a hint of the excesses and pretensions of dining culture in municipal Italy during the first-century AD, as well as some of the contemporary economic realities (Verboven, 2009).

Given its political and social possibilities, the *cena* was just as popular in the emperor’s palace as it was in the *triclinium* of the private citizen. Here we are best informed about the formal dinner (*cena recta*), especially as it was embraced in the later first century AD by the emperor Domitian. Indeed, the sources speak of the splendor of the palace dining hall itself, the *Domus Flavia*, with its soaring roof, colored marble, tiled floors, and shimmering water fountains (Stat. *Silv.* 4.2.26–9; Bek, 1983). Additionally, we learn of large numbers of diners from every social rank celebrating amid the presence of the emperor himself, who dines apart from the crowd for all to see (Mart. 8.49). This snapshot of social equality among the diners finds little support in the wider evidence, however, and it more likely represents the sycophancy of those who wished to stay on the safe side of the emperor’s brutal temper (Donahue, 2004b, 75). Regrettably, the true social identities of these diners cannot be recovered; nonetheless, it is clear that the extravagance of the emperor’s *cena recta* remained irresistible for some, such as the provincial who once offered 200 000 sesterces for an invitation to dine with the emperor

(Suet. *Cal.* 39). This evidence finds an interesting modern parallel in the well-publicized story of a Washington, DC couple who successfully “crashed” a state dinner at the White House in 2009 (Argetsinger & Roberts, 2009). In contrast to their ancient counterpart, these modern gate-crashers did not offer any money for their invitation; their goal was simply to get in and to mingle – even for a single evening – among the rich and powerful. Their story would seem to suggest that this impulse is just as irresistible today as it was on the Palatine Hill some two millennia ago.

Beyond the dinners of the *triclinium*, the wider population might also benefit from public dinners (*cenae publicae*), which prosperous Romans provided when celebrating milestone events in their lives. Certain “crises” of the life cycle (*rites de passage*), including the coming of age ceremony, where Roman adolescents received the adult toga (*toga virilis*), the marriage rite (*cena nuptialis*), and the funerary ceremony (*cena novendialis*) all provided festal opportunities. For example, the young Octavian, later to become the emperor Augustus, once staged a magnificent entertainment and granted the citizenry a festival at public expense upon shaving for the first time (Dio Cass. 48.34). The association of meals with these events is not fully understood, although eating on such occasions might have something to do with celebrating the fundamental life changes that each of these “crises” provokes (Donahue, 2004b, 8–9).

In addition to the ritual ceremonies of the life cycle, important individuals might offer a dinner upon their accession to political office (*cena aditialis*), or upon their arrival in the city (*cena adventicia*), the most notorious example of the latter being the dinner of 2000 choice fish and 7000 birds once offered by the brother of Vitellius upon the emperor’s arrival in Rome (Suet. *Vit.* 13.2). Finally, we must not overlook the vitality of communal feasting among various *collegia*, those voluntary associations of free men and/or slaves formed around a common trade or cult, both in Rome and throughout the empire. Instructive in this regard is the charter of the college of Aesculapius and Hygia in Rome (mid-second century AD), which records seven gatherings in its list of meals (*ordo cenarum*). Most striking, however, is the emphasis on rank in determining the share of food that each of the 60 members received. The college’s patrons and elected leader were eligible for the largest shares, with the remaining membership receiving lesser portions by rank. These *cenae* provided occasions for eating and socializing but also for creating and perpetuating new social hierarchies, however temporary they might be (Donahue, 2004b, 84–9). Clearly, in all of this evidence the opportunity to enhance one’s position, whether in life or in death, was never very far from the dinner table.

The popularity of the epulum

As a banquet offered to large numbers, the *epulum* is the most widely attested eating event in the ancient sources. Associated from earliest times with Roman state religious ceremonies, it came to be an especially powerful tool for the emperor, who was particularly keen to provide such banquets to key constituents as a means of enhancing his own reputation and of ensuring loyalty. Thus do we find that Tiberius once invited all senators and their wives to a banquet in honor of his conquest of the Germani, an occasion that also marked his restoration of the temples of Concord and Castor and Pollux (Dio Cass. 55.8.2). At larger public feasts, however, it was more common to segregate recipients by social class. Statius writes that Domitian once gave a banquet in the Colosseum during the festival of the Saturnalia during which handsome attendants carried “more luxurious feasts” (*epulasque lautiores*) to certain attendees, presumably senators and dignitaries, while the rest of the audience received fare that was scattered among them from lines strung above the amphitheater (Stat. *Silv.* 1.6.28–34; Donahue, 2004b, 21–3). Elsewhere, the imperially sponsored *epulum* could devolve into full-fledged degeneracy, as in the banquets of Nero, which featured prostitutes, dancing girls, and, on one occasion, a banquet that cost four million sesterces and included silk turbans for all of the guests (Suet. *Nero* 27.3). While it remains difficult to make sense of the more fantastical elements of this banquet, such accounts are consistent with a biographical tradition that placed a high value on the emperor’s personality and behavior. Thus, dining habits became a legitimate marker by which ancient authors made distinctions between “good” and “bad” emperors.

Following upon this model, municipal elites also provided *epula* for the citizens of their communities on any number of occasions. These feasts, especially popular in Italy and the Roman West, are preserved in hundreds of inscriptions that provide a deeper understanding of both public feasting and private philanthropy (*munificentia privata*). In a typical scenario a prominent local citizen would be honored with a statue for his various accomplishments and benefactions, whether by the local town council, a family member, a group for which the honoree served as a patron, or even one or several of his freedmen. The honoree would then reciprocate with a gift, often in the form of an *epulum*, or funds for such a feast, for all of the townspeople. An inscription recording the career of the honoree and his benefactions, including the feast, would then be placed in a prominent location for everyone to see (Donahue, 2004b, 163–239).

Yet another philanthropic option was for the donor to set up a permanent endowment for a particular municipality, the interest from which would pay for, among other things, an annual feast on occasions such as the birthday of the benefactor or of a family member. While the particulars of these schemes might vary, two features are especially noteworthy. First, these banquets were typically tied to social class, with those of higher status within the community

receiving a better meal, or more money for a meal, than the regular *populus*. Second, this system not only served to enhance the reputation of the donor, whose generosity could help to fulfill the needs of a particular community, but it also allowed for participation by groups that were typically excluded from the public life of the community, most notably women. Illustrative in this regard are the contributions of a certain Junia Rustica, a priestess from Cartima in Roman Spain during the first century, who, as the inscription records,

rebuilt the public porticoes ruined by age, gave a parcel of land for the baths, paid the public taxes for the town, set up a bronze statue of Mars in the forum, gave as a gift at her own expense porticoes on the bath on her own property with a fish pool and a statue of Cupid, with a public feast and shows given at her own expense

While her generosity is extraordinary, Junia Rustica can tell us little about her own level of economic independence, a regrettable result of our limited evidence on this key issue. Even so, her narrative confirms that well-to-do women could command the same kind of high-profile exposure within their communities as men, and we must suppose that such opportunities were as important to these women as they were to those who benefitted from their support (Donahue, 2004a).

The convivium as celebration

A popular version of the *cena* was the *convivium*, a party, often for large numbers. The literal meaning of the term – “sharing life together” – denoted, in the Roman mind at least, a state of fellowship that was more expansive than its Greek equivalent, the *symposion*, the all-male drinking party, which meant merely “to drink together.” Over time, however, the *convivium* appears to have lost whatever lofty aspirations it once possessed, becoming in the process a celebration offered in any number of settings. We know of *convivia* provided for voters by candidates running for office (Plin. *Ep.* 6.19.1) and of *convivia publica* that formed part of the regular community calendar (*CIL* 11.1421 = *ILS* 140), although in both cases additional details are lacking. Most provocative are the *convivia* of the later Roman emperors, which include exorbitantly expensive dining furniture (*SHA Verus* 5.1), feasts that were color coded by day (green food one day, blue the next) (*SHA Elagab.* 19), and even a version of the modern “progressive dinner,” a dinner party in which each successive course is prepared and eaten at the residence of a different host. In the ancient arrangement, the diners were hardly able to complete the circuit within a single day, since the plan also included bathing and dallying with women between courses (*SHA Elagab.* 30). The source for these tales, the fourth-century biography of emperors known as the *Historia Augusta*, is notoriously unreliable. Even so, the very fact that such stories persisted in the

biographical tradition points to a continued Roman interest in the character of the emperor. On another level, such evidence, even if sensationalized, may well reflect deeper cultural anxieties about food and its proper use, notions that were ever present in a society where food could be scarce and its allocation so closely tied to social rank.

Whether the Romans were speaking of a *cena*, an *epulum*, or a *convivium*, we are able to benefit from a lexicon of eating that tells us much about the forms and opportunities available to diners during the Imperial period. Even so, everyday reality was not always so tidy. For example, in what ways was a *convivium* all that different from an *epulum*, or an *epulum* from a *cena*? Did the presence or absence of certain material factors, which the ancients recognized but we cannot, play a role in favoring one experience over another? Or were these terms fluid enough in the Roman mind to be used interchangeably without careful regard to particulars? Contributing to this uncertainty is the Roman predilection for focusing on affective factors such as the generosity of the donor or the grandeur of the experience itself and less so on the food actually provided, or even the number of diners in attendance on any given occasion. We can also suppose that such lack of detail is symptomatic of the ancient belief that dining was such a regular feature of everyday life that its particulars did not merit extensive coverage in the sources. At the same time, these various dining arrangements provide critical insight into the lived reality of status, gender, and hierarchy in Roman society. That these issues were important enough to find expression at the dining table tells us much about how the Romans viewed themselves.

Food and the Roman Soldier

The Roman army in the imperial period numbered about 300 000 troops, spread between legions and auxiliaries from Britain to the Euphrates River (Le Bohec, 2000, 33–5). Given these numbers, provisioning requirements and logistics were extraordinary (Roth, 1999, 7–67). In Roman Britain, where we are best informed about these matters, forts were stocked for one year, during which time a typical soldier could be expected to consume one-third of a ton of grain. Multiply this by the 25 000 troops in Britain in the third century and the daily consumption of grain alone comes to a staggering 33.5 tons (Davies, 1989, 187). Moreover, this preference for grain was by no means accidental. In its unmilled state it was less likely to spoil than other foodstuffs and the hard work of milling helped to reinforce archaic virtue among the soldiers (Phang, 2008, 283–4).

In general, military provisions came from a variety of sources, some of which were fixed, such as civilian suppliers and contracts in bulk; others were the result of the initiative of the soldier himself in the form of extortion, hunting, and private purchase (Roth, 1999, 223–43). This evidence, combined with

foods known to have been consumed at military forts, including various meats, seafood, fruits, nuts, and vegetables, indicates that Roman soldiers were fed at least as adequately as, if not better than, their civilian counterparts. In fact, there are no recorded complaints about the military diet (Davies, 1989, 206). Indeed, this may be an accident of our sources or a reflection of ancient expectation levels, which, in general, were lower as compared to those of later times. It might also suggest, however, that keeping soldiers fed was an objective that the Romans took seriously and generally executed with success. At the same time, while the scale of dining in a military context was unavoidably vast, it is still possible to appreciate not only the nutritive but also the emotional role that food and drink played in the daily experience of the common soldier by briefly examining the evidence in three areas: food on the march; food from family and friends; and food and discipline (*disciplina militaris*). In each case, modern evidence can help to illuminate the ancient testimony in useful ways.

Food “to go:” “iron rations” and “MREs”

While the Roman soldier could expect to be fed regularly, this does not mean, of course, that the fare was always appetizing. The “iron rations” of soldiers on the march consisted of bacon fat (*laridum*), which was more portable than oil; hard tack (*bucellatum*), a low-quality bread; and cheap wine (*acetum*), which could be mixed with water to form *posca*, a beverage inferior to vintage wine (*vinum*) (*HA Avidius Cassius* 5.3). Those soldiers with their simple cooking implements and rations fastened on long poles, as depicted on the Column of Trajan in Rome, help to capture this reality in a dramatic visual context (Coarelli, 2000, 48 plate 4, 49 plate 5).

While we lack ancient testimony on the desirability of these foodstuffs, one modern piece of evidence perhaps provides a useful context:

As for food, all the soldiers had to eat were MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). Packaged in encyclopedia-sized brown plastic bags, these consisted of a pouch of processed meat or spaghetti, crackers, a load of junk food and candy, a powdered beverage mix, and a plastic bag of chemicals to use for heating the food. (You added water to the chemical bag to create heat and plunged your meal pouch inside.) Few of the MREs were appetizing, and their low-fiber content was constipating, so the acronym quickly earned alternative meanings: Meals Rejected by Everyone, Meals Refusing to Exit, and “It’s not a Meal, it’s not Ready, and you can’t Eat it”

(Benedict, 2009, 106).

This account belongs to an American female soldier recently deployed to Iraq. It is striking that her MRE appears to be no more appetizing than the iron rations consumed by the Roman soldier who served in this same part of the world 2000 years earlier. To be fair, technological advances in packaging and

preservation must not be taken lightly, as they have allowed both the modern soldier and space traveler to be fed adequately, although perhaps not always happily. Even so, this kind of evidence helps to provide some insight into what must have been a common complaint among ancient soldiers, whether they were marching along the remarkably engineered roads built for their transport or were eating together as messmates in the tents or barracks quarters (*contubernia*) that stretched across the Roman frontier.

Comfort food: the ancient and modern “care package”

As mentioned earlier, soldiers acquired food from various sources. One such source – family and friends – is vividly portrayed, thanks to the survival of letters written by Roman soldiers requesting various foodstuffs from these providers. Once again, it is useful to compare the ancient evidence with modern accounts in order to gain a sharper perspective on Roman realities:

Rustius Barbarus to Pompeius, greetings. I pray to the gods that you are well. Why do you write to me with such hostility or why do you judge me to be so uncaring? If you did not send the green vegetables to me so quickly, must I immediately forget your friendship? I am not that kind of man nor am I so thoughtless. I think of you not so much as a friend as a twin brother born of the same flesh. It's a term I give you quite often in my letters but you think of me in different terms. I have received bunches of cabbage and one cheese. I have sent you by Arrianus, the trooper, a box, inside of which is a small cake and a denarius(?) wrapped in a small cloth. Please buy me a matium of salt and send it to me rather quickly, because I want to bake some bread.... for I will give for him to bring ... I have received 1 bunch of beetroot and you write to me about [...] and salt, if I need any ... since I need it for a holiday and I have sent you an oil jar in order to send to me 6 cotyli of oil, either castor-oil or radish-oil. Take care to write and tell me the cost so that I can repay you like a friend. Tell Serapias that if she wants to receive 15 denarii, I will bring them to her. Best wishes to Sertorius

(Guéraud, 1942, no. 2; Davies, 1989, 201–2).

Meena sent tea and trail mix and a steady stream of Bollywood films to screen for my platoon. Charlie Hooker's five-year-old mailed a hand-drawn birthday card and a huge bag of beef jerky My sister Bridget sent her special brownies (they lasted exactly seven minutes) Packages also arrived from random charities. Mountains of PowerBars and Twizzlers towered in the tents

(Mullaney, 2009, 244).

The first passage is one of three letters in an exchange between a certain Rustius Barbarus, a soldier stationed in Egypt, and his friend Pompeius.

Preserved on a sherd on the road from Coptos to the Red Sea, it is one of 59 Imperial-era letters written by soldiers as discovered in the early decades of the twentieth century. A common way for some soldiers to expand their diet was to request additional food from friends and relatives. The items that Rustius receives from his friend Pompeius – green vegetables, cabbage, cheese, and salt – are perhaps rather mundane by modern standards but may well have represented foodstuffs that were not ordinarily available. In this case, they seem to have been required for a special camp feast (Davies, 1989, 202). Additional letters from this cache include requests for bread, dates, oil, and an assortment of vegetables, as well as fish, wild game, and oats and barley (Davies, 1989, 200–1).

The second excerpt is from a recent autobiographical memoir that recounts the coming of age of a US Army captain stationed in Afghanistan in 2003. Here, some of these foods, such as beef jerky and Twizzlers (candy licorice), are clearly “junk” foods to be enjoyed more for their taste than for their nutritional value. On the other hand, items such as the brownies that lasted “exactly seven minutes” are closer to “comfort” food in that they evoke nostalgic or sentimental appeal, evident in the fact that the author’s sister baked them and that they are considered “special.”

We must always be careful in drawing comparisons between ancient and modern armies, especially since aspects of the Roman army, such as the social composition of its forces, are not as well known as we would like (Le Bohec, 2000, 8–9). Even so, these excerpts are striking in their shared emphasis on the affective power of food, that is, food’s ability to provide temporary relief from the wartime realities of boredom and danger. It does not matter so much, therefore, whether the items were cabbage or candy, bread or beef jerky. Food was meant to provide temporary pleasure and maintain the bond between a soldier and his loved ones by helping to mitigate the physical and emotional distancing that was the inevitable result of life in the military.

Disciplina militaris: food as equalizer, food as punishment

Excessive eating and drinking in the military was problematic, for it represented a potential threat to discipline. Such behavior might even lead to calamity and death, as in the famously drunken episodes of Alexander the Great, which resulted in the burning of the palace at Persepolis and the death of his commander Cleitus (O’Brien, 1992, 105–11, 128–41). Given this reality, it is worthwhile to conclude with a brief examination of food and drink as a feature of military discipline, especially as found in the relationship between the emperor or commander and his troops and in a punitive context.

In attempting to gain a clearer picture of the role of eating and drinking in the relationship between a commander and his troops, the ancient sources often

portray officers as consuming the same fare as the rank and file. We find the emperor Caracalla grinding his own grain to make unleavened bread on a campfire and using wooden utensils while on campaign (Hdn. 4.7.5; cf. Dio 78.13.1–2), and Trajan going without food and drink along with his own troops during a time of shortage (Plin. *Pan.* 13.1). In a modern context, recent US presidents have sometimes made unannounced visits to troops overseas. These trips, aimed at boosting morale on the front lines and maintaining a focus on the war effort, inevitably include an opportunity for the commander-in-chief to eat with the troops. On these occasions, the food and drink may be of higher quality than usual but the important point is that president and soldiers eat and drink the same fare.

Such behavior, whether ancient or modern, is calculated but nevertheless significant. On the one hand, it represents an instance of social leveling, where the commander becomes the equal of his troops by sharing their food and drink (Phang, 2008, 277). On the other hand, all of this is temporary, as no one truly believes that the commander has become a regular soldier, or that the traditions of discipline and hierarchy no longer prevail. Even so, eating and drinking provide an effective mechanism for boosting morale, itself an important component in helping to maintain the discipline upon which an army relies so heavily for success. It should be noted too that the harsh nature of a military campaign more readily lends itself to this strategy of temporary social leveling than the more settled existence of life at the fort, where the commander does not feel as compelled to share the same food as his troops. Receipts for food and drink for officers from the fort at Vindolanda in Roman Britain would seem to make this clear (Bowman & Thomas, 1994, nos 190, 191).

Equally interesting is the practice of withholding or limiting access to food and drink in order to improve military discipline or to impose punishment. In the case of the former, sources dating from the Republican period commonly portray military generals as restricting their troops' access to camp followers and luxury items in order to strengthen discipline and morale, especially after a defeat. The thinking was that by holding soldiers to certain long-held standards, which included the consumption of those foodstuffs most associated with archaic virtues, i.e. grain, meat, and vegetables, the troops would be less likely to become distracted or "soft" (Phang, 2008, 279–82). At the same time, food could just as easily be tied to punishment. Augustus once fed barley (instead of the preferred wheat) to troops who had not performed satisfactorily (after he decimated those cohorts that had fled from battle) (Suet. *Aug.* 24.2; Dio Cass. 49.38.4, 48.42.2). At other times, the punishment could be extremely severe, as when Galba deliberately starved a soldier who sold his rations for profit in the later first century (Suet. *Gal.* 7). The integrity of the military food supply had to be maintained at all times and so in this case the punishment was harsh. Not surprisingly, we have no account of the

troops' reaction to these punitive measures, but they surely would not have been pleased.

Food and drink, therefore, remained critically important to the Roman military. Much like their civilian contemporaries, soldiers showed great interest in what they ate and with whom they celebrated. At the same time, the military's need to maintain discipline and hierarchy could influence food choices and availability in ways that were not as commonly found among the wider *populus*.

Conclusion

A man who was fond of wine was once offered some grapes at dessert after dinner. "Thank you," he said, pushing the plate aside, "but I am not accustomed to take my wine in pills."

This aphorism is one of many belonging to Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the famed eighteenth-century French gastronome and the author of the still-influential treatise *The Physiology of Taste*. This work owes much to Epicurus in outlook and thus brings us back to where we began by providing an aphorism that is not only amusing but also says something about taste, preference, and, more generally, pleasure. As we have seen, all of these elements were present at the Roman dining table in varying measure. But so too was an understanding of place. This certainly would have been evident to the diner at the emperor's palace, but it would have been equally evident to the Roman attending a public feast in the Colosseum, to the townsman eating and drinking at a statue dedication, to the member celebrating the birthday of his *collegium*, and to the soldier on march or in camp. For a Roman of the Imperial era, food and drink was essential for health, but dining, the very act of eating and drinking with others, remained essential for social identity.

FURTHER READING

The scholarship on Roman dining has grown considerably in recent years. For general treatments of the topic in Greece and Rome, see the work of Wilkins & Hill (2006), which explores foodstuffs and food and drink in religion, ancient thought, medicine, and literature. Also essential, especially on food crisis, malnutrition, and food in the family, is Garnsey (1999, 1998). For a remarkable study that places consumption in a wider Mediterranean context from antiquity to the Middle Ages, see the work of Horden & Purcell (2000), which analyzes people and their environments in terms of microecologies and the networks to which they belong. Several edited collections will provide the student with a useful introduction to various topics. See Gold & Donahue (2005), which focuses on historical, literary, and artistic approaches to Roman dining. Wilkins, Harvey, & Dobson (1995) offer 32 essays on a wide range of subjects, including food and drink in pre and post-Roman societies. Other

essential edited volumes include those by Nielsen & Nielsen (1998), Murray (1995, 1990a), and Slater (1991). Note especially in the Murray (1995, 1990a) and Slater (1991) volumes the contributions of D'Arms, which combine a keen analysis of the subtleties of Roman social relations with careful use of comparative evidence on topics such as drinking and slavery. Among the most accessible reference works on ancient foodstuffs are those by Dalby (2003b) and Davidson (2006). For various specialized studies, see McGovern (2003), on ancient wine; Dunbabin (2003), on the portrayal of eating in Roman art; Roller (2006), on the complexities of dining postures; Donahue (2004b), on community feasts in Rome and the western provinces; for food and the Roman military, see the work of Davies (1989), Roth (1999), and Phang (2008), who provides an excellent treatment of food and drink in the context of military discipline and austerity in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 25

Table Manners

Robin Nadeau

Living in society implies living with rules. What and how a person eats is conditioned by culture. Even today, we can recognize someone's origins by what he or she eats and how he or she eats it. Eating with the fingers, with a fork and knife, or with chopsticks implies a learning process, after which the eater is able to eat like the other members of the community. The slightest difference in manners and behavior may suggest a difference in gender, identity, and social status. Each member of society is expected to behave in accordance with his or her status (Nadeau, 2010a, 21–30). In that sense, how people eat is as socially significant as what they eat.

Ancient Greeks possessed a concept of table manners close to our own understanding. It belongs to the category of *symptomika*, according to Plutarch's *Table Talks* (*Mor.* 629d). As far as we can go back in time, table manners were discussed in Greek literature, since eating with people requires guidelines. Without the notions of politeness, self-restraint, and consideration of others, a feast can turn into chaos. Feasting was a great part of Homeric social and political life. The law of hospitality (*xenia*) is praised and its rituals are described in detail on many occasions, but also the good and bad consequences of its zealous application or disrespect. Nestor, Menelaus, and the Phaeacians are pictured as typical exemplary hosts, whereas the Cyclops Polyphemus is a bad host and the suitors bad guests (*Od.* books 3, 4; 6.187ff.; book 7 etc.; 9.224 ff.; Reece, 1993; Vidal-Naquet, 1986, 24–5; Saïd, 2010, 83–91). In that sense, Homeric poetry had an obvious didactic purpose, giving good and bad examples of behavior (Thornton, 1970, 38–46; Stewart, 1976; Saïd, 1979).

Table manners are usually taught in childhood by parents or by some other person of authority. This intergenerational transmission process is called “psychogenetic” by Norbert Elias (2000, xi). Children develop from an impulsive and self-centered state of development to a more sociable state where they can learn order and self-restraint. Expressed differently, they learn to become table companions and to behave according to social expectations (Jeanneret, 1991, 29). Table manners most often are taught orally or learned by observation. A few examples of this process are preserved (Lissarrague, 1990, 9–16; Nadeau, 2010a, 111–22). Plutarch gives us a great example for antiquity: “... we teach our children to put on their shoes and clothes, and to take their meat with the right hand and hold their bread in the left, on the assumption that even these things do not come by chance, but require oversight and attention” (*Mor.* 99d (transl. Babbitt)); or “And in general is it

not unusual to accustom children to take food with their right hand and to reprimand them if one puts out the left hand, ..." (*Mor.* 5a). Thus, we learn that children were taught to manipulate food only with their right hand, because, in adulthood, Greeks and Romans ate mostly reclining on their left side on a couch. If they rested on their left elbow, the only hand freely available to manipulate food and bring it to the mouth was the right hand. The left hand, then, would be used only to hold things steady, such as a piece of bread or a vessel like a drinking cup or a *kantharos* (larger drinking vessel).

Eating on a couch is a common practice in classical societies. But why did the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans eat while reclined? It has been argued that this custom came from the Ancient Near East. It constitutes one of the best examples of cross-cultural transfer from Eastern cultures to Greece (Dentzer, 1982; Boardman, 1990; Burkert, 1991). The dining couch appears in the Book of Amos (6.3–7) from mid-eight century Palestine. Amos is a Hebrew prophet reproving the eating habits of fellow Jews in Samaria, who enjoyed luxurious feasting on couches decorated with ivory. The first indisputable depiction of this custom comes from Assyria (about 645–0 BC). It is known as the "Garden party" relief, from Nineveh, the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (now at the British Museum). The Neo-Assyrian King Ashurbanipal is depicted reclined on a high couch, with his queen seated on a throne located at the end of his couch and a table facing him. The couch depicted seems to replace the traditional royal throne and symbolizes political supremacy (Laser, 1968). It is interesting to compare this scene with similar symposium depictions in Greek art of the Archaic and Classical periods, since the disposition and attitude of the diners appear to be roughly the same in both cultures (Dentzer, 1982).

Eating in a reclining fashion was adopted afterwards in both Etruria and Rome, perhaps through contact with Greeks (Rathje, 1990, 1995; Dunbabin, 2003, 25–33). This early evidence of cross-cultural transfer, from East to West, points to the emergence of a common eating culture in the Ancient Mediterranean. This culture of reclined feasting is even more obvious in the Hellenistic and Imperial eras (Klinghardt, 1996, 23–7; Smith, 2003, 2–3). It is somewhat similar to the common use of the fork in modern Western countries or chopsticks in East Asia today. Thus, regional variations could exist according to the social, political and historical context in force (*infra*).

The *kline* (dining couch) replaced the throne (*thronos*) as the power symbol par excellence in the Ancient Near East and Ancient Greece. One of the earliest attestations of the dining couch (*kline*) in Ancient Greece comes from the archaic poet Alcman (late seventh century BC: fr. 19 Page). In fact, the use of the *kline* coincides with the creation of the symposium as a new social and political ritual, although some scholars trace it as far back as the Homeric poems (Dalby, 1996, 102; Wecowski, 2002; Garcia Soler, 2010, 42). For a late author such as Athenaeus (late second to early third century AD), the

reclined position is a sign of decadence, since diners consequently adopt a passive position and have to be served by domestic servants. This passivity is opposed to the perception that Homer's heroes personally sacrificed and cooked the meat they ate and did all the chores related to dining on a military campaign (Ath. 18a–b; 428b). Thus, they were considered examples of piousness and simplicity, in contrast to diners reclining on couches.

Eating in a reclined fashion on a couch dramatically transformed table manners in Ancient Greece. The introduction of this new piece of furniture implied a revolution in eating gestures, architecture, art, craftsmanship, and social relations. The couch created a brand new eating etiquette, although traditional values such as hospitality (*xenia*), reciprocity, and equality remained. It seems that the *kline* was adopted at first as a mean of social distinction between the aristocracy and other social classes, since it implied a brand new and costly setting: a richly decorated *andron* (men's room) – often with mosaics; handcrafted *klinai*, sometimes decorated with pieces of inlaid ivory, silver, or gold; new drinking and eating ware and other decorations and devices such as garlands and perfumes, entertainment, and so on (Xenocr. fr. 1; Murray, 1983, 1995). In the same way that the Homeric feast showed the social status of the guests (kings and princes) joined in reciprocal relations by the custom of hospitality, Archaic and Classical symposia underlined the diners' wealth and social standing (Murray, 1983; Vickers, 1990, 106). However, if the symposium suggests the idea of “grand eating,” lower classes probably had access to less extravagant symposia too (Fisher, 2000; Wilkins, 2000a, xxiv).

In ancient Greece and Rome, dining position expressed membership in and, at the same time, the structure and ideology of society: on the one hand, a relative idea of equality prevailed in Greece; on the other, a strict and codified way of underlining differences in social status in Rome (see Stein-Hölkeskamp in this volume). Even if equality was a central concept within Greek culture and the Greek symposium, some inequalities remained. A place of honor was assigned to a guest the host desired to honor. Such guests were entitled to additional portions of meat and/or wine (Hom. *Il.* 8.161–2; *Od.* 3.36 ff.; 14.437–8) and were assigned particular places (*Il.* 12.310–2), since diners were placed in order of importance from left to right (Pl. *Smp.* 175a–e, 231a; Lucian *Symp.* 9; Nadeau, 2010a, 305–25). However, too many guests and not enough reclining places could mean that a male guest might be assigned to a seat and eat in a sitting fashion (Plu. *Mor.* 617e; Lucian *Symp.* 13). In Hellenistic kingdoms, kings reserved the central reclining place for themselves in a new setup of the reclining layout. This arrangement may be an early version of what would become the Roman *triclinium* (Dunbabin, 1998, 84 ff.; I. Nielsen, 1998, 105; Vössing, 2004, 123–33). In Rome, reclining positions conveyed the difference of ranks between the eaters even more explicitly. If the Greek *andron* configuration with its relatively square shape

made all reclined places more or less exactly the same, with one table for each *kline*, the Roman *triclinium* configuration created a distinction between better and less desired places. The less desirable spots were mainly those away from the best dishes disposed on the table and those that gave a limited view of all the guests and entertainment (Lucian *Merc. Cond.* 26).

Greek wives or freeborn women are typically represented on vases and reliefs as sitting, while prostitutes and/or courtesans might recline as companions to the men's pleasure (Dentzer, 1982, 123–5, 316–22; Peschel, 1987; Lissarrague, 1994, 216–22). However, we have to ask ourselves whether the depiction of women in art and literature, particularly on funerary and votive reliefs, is representative of reality. It is very difficult to draw the line between norms, cultural prejudices, moral and ideological projections, and artistic or narrative preset codes (Lissarrague, 1994, 139–42; Burton, 1998). Greek iconographical codes give a lower social status to a seated woman depicted beside a reclined man. Such a depiction embodies a typical idealized picture of the family structure, with the father reclining in majesty, surrounded by a sitting obedient wife and their standing children (Dentzer, 1982, 540, 547–52; for Rome: Roller, 2006). We have to wait until the Roman period before it is possible to see freeborn Greek women eating reclined on a couch beside their husbands among other men (Nadeau, 2010b, 14–20). The same phenomenon seems to apply to children. Boys have to await adulthood before they can eat in a reclined fashion (Xen. *Smp.* 1.8; Bremmer, 1990; Booth, 1991). Some may have had to complete a rite of passage, as presented by the Greek historian Hegesander. Young Macedonian men, he says, were denied the reclined position until they succeeded in killing a wild boar without the use of hunting-nets. He claims that Cassander was still eating in a sitting position at the age of 35 because he failed to complete this trial of strength and courage (*FHG* iv.419.33).

Roman women were not excluded from the *cena* and were allowed to eat in a reclined fashion beside their husbands (Roller, 2006), but political maturity seems to be required before boys could eat in a reclined fashion in the imperial family of the Julio-Claudians according to Roman historians (Suet. *Cl.* 32; Tac. *Ann.* 13.16). However, numerous counter-examples of boys eating in a reclined fashion can be found in Latin literature, which contradict the idea of a strict and codified etiquette (Roller, 2006, 157–75, 178). To sum up, the only unfailing rule consists of showing the eater's place in society and within his or her family with the appropriate eating arrangement: in addition to the place allotted in the *andron* or the *triclinium* and the food allocated to each eater according to his or her social status, a reclined position trumps a seated one and a seated one a standing one (Bradley, 1998, 47–50; Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2005b, 101–11; Roller, 2006, 175–9; Nadeau, 2010a, 302–25). The eating positions reproduce the system of honor in Roman society in particular.

The common feasting culture shared by many people around the ancient Mediterranean nevertheless allows for local and regional diversity. There is no such thing as universal culture and customs in Ancient Greece and under the Roman Empire. It is said for instance that Cretans dined in a seated position (Pyrgio *FGrH* 467 F 1), as did the Arcadians (Harmod. *FGrH* 319 F 1). In early fifth-century Athens, the *tholos* could have been designed to accommodate the 50 prytaneis in office at the same time under the same roof (Arist. *Ath.* 43.3). This would mean that they had to eat in a sitting position (Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 168; Cooper & Morris, 1990) rather than reclined (Miller, 1978, 57–62). If this was the case, it is one of the oldest examples of a building in ancient Greece specially designed to symbolize isonomy.

In every culture, the way people eat is directly related to the content of their plate. Put differently, what you eat and how you eat it are closely connected. Westerners can eat steak because they use a fork and a knife. Asian food is pre-cut in bite-size pieces easy to handle with chopsticks, and Indian food may be eaten with the fingers. Greeks and Romans ate with their fingers. Therefore, food was usually pre-cut into bite-size, easy to handle pieces. This made life easier for eaters, who did not have to bother with cutlery. Therefore, the proper way of eating consisted in waiting until food cooled down before the eaters could touch it with their bare fingers and put it into their mouths. Someone who helped himself immediately, without waiting for the others, would be considered an impolite glutton, says Chrysippus:

I recall a certain gourmand who had so completely abandoned any concern for what others thought of his behavior that at the baths he openly tried to accustom his hand to heat by plunging it into hot water, and his mouth by gargling with it. He did this, of course, to make himself difficult to dislodge when hot dishes were served; they claimed that he tried to convince the cooks to serve the food as hot as possible, so that he could gobble it down alone while the others were unable to follow his example (xxviii fr. 10, *SVF* iii.200 (transl. Olson); also Alexis, fr. 178).

Meat was eaten in small pieces (Attic black-figure *dinos*, London, BM B.46 = ABV 91.5; Petr. 36).¹ This has something to do with the cooking techniques in fashion. Greeks usually spit-roasted or boiled pre-cut cubes of meat (*Il.* 9.210–4).² When an entire roasted animal was presented to the eaters, a carver normally would cut it into smaller, individual pieces (Diph. fr. 90; Lucian *Merc. Cond.* 26; see Chandezon in this volume). These pieces of similar size also symbolize an arithmetical conception of political power, since equal shares (*moira*) represent political equality, *isonomia* (Berthiaume, 1982, 50–1, 63–4; Detienne & Svenbro, 1989, 152–5; Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 471–82). However, from time to time, it is possible to come across an eater depicted in a reclined position with a knife in his right hand: this eater is often Heracles (Wolf, 1993, 92–3). An Attic red-figure column krater from Chiusi seems to imply that he cuts pieces of meat for himself from a strip of flesh laid hanging

on the side of the table (Chiusi, Nat. Arch. Mus. 1849 = ARV² 281, 33).³ However, such a practice looks quite uncomfortable in a reclined position and is rarely depicted. One might wonder whether such depictions of Heracles with a knife are a genuine portrayal of reality or rather give information about Heracles' personality. They might even be a scene of *theoxenia*. Indeed, these scenes may allude to the fact that Hercules was considered the inventor of many blood-sacrifice rituals in Greek cities and sanctuaries, and that he would act symbolically as *mageiros*, as sacrificer and carver, who would personally distribute sacrificial meat to the eaters/worshippers. Therefore, it would be a depiction of Heracles the sacrificer/*mageiros* and patron of civic communities (Il. 9. 205 ff.).⁴

To sacrifice an animal for a meal creates a social and religious event, since the abundance of meat becomes an occasion to share a large amount of it with others. Yet, eating together entails rules. Otherwise, if guests deliberately ignore the rules of sharing and eating together, chaos, even brawling, becomes the inevitable result (Plu. *Mor.* 615f–616c; Lucian, *Symp.*). This concern is expressed explicitly by Athenaeus in his attempt to explain the words *thalía* (feast) and *dais* (meal):

For primitive human beings, who of course lacked plentiful food, used to all go after it the moment it appeared, seize it aggressively, and wrench it away from anyone who had it; this disorder was even accompanied by murder. This is most likely also the source of the term *atasthalia* (reckless wickedness), because people first committed crimes against one another during *thaliai*. But after Demeter provided them with large amounts of food, they divided it up so that everyone had an equal share, and of sharing goblets when we drink; because these practices are all characteristic of individuals moving toward equality. Food is therefore called *dais*...

(Ath. 12d–e (transl. Olson)).

Eating a meal implies the notion of sharing and order (Plu. *Mor.* 726e, 697c; Cic. *Cato* 45).

As today, rules and table manners change from one place to another, from one social group to another. For members of the intelligentsia, food, drink, and the proper setting are not enough to guarantee a great meal. Knowledge or philosophy, as Plutarch puts it (*Mor.* 716d–f), must be a part of a meal to ensure that guests behave correctly and do not overindulge in food and wine (Romeri, 2002, 325–30). For members of the elite such as Plutarch, respect for exclusive codes of conduct creates social distinction, since wealth is not enough to prove one's superior social status. Knowledge and specific learned behaviors distinguish a parvenu from a genuine member of the old aristocratic elite (Petr. 59). Members of the elite had to learn and apply the appropriate etiquette to be recognized as such (Nadeau, 2010a, 99–152). To make sure that the right rules were applied and followed, some were written down for the

benefit of all. For example, in the case of the association of the Iobacchoi in Athens, we can read (second to third century AD; extract from Tod, 1974, 87–9)

No one may either sing or create a disturbance or applaud at the gathering, but each shall say and act his allotted part with all good order and quietness under the direction of the priest or the arch-bacchus. No Iobacchus who has not paid his contributions for the monthly and anniversary meetings shall enter the gathering until the priests have decided either that he must pay or that he may be admitted. If anyone start a fight or be found acting in disorderly fashion or occupying the seat of any other member or using insulting or abusive language to anyone, the person abused or insulted shall produce two of the Iobacchi to state upon oath that they heard him insulted or abused, and he who was guilty of the insult or abuse shall pay to the Society twenty-five light drachmas, or he who was responsible for the fight shall pay the same sum of twenty-five drachmas, on pain of exclusion from the meetings of the Iobacchi until they make payment. And if anyone come to blows, he who has been struck shall lodge a written statement with the priest or vice-priest, ..., and the Iobacchi shall decide the question by vote under the presidency of the priest, and the penalty shall be exclusion for a period to be determined and a fine not exceeding twenty-five silver denarii

Feasts are an occasion for pleasure and potentially for excess. Rules and codes of conduct can seldom be enforced by political or religious officials. This is the reason why many poets and moral authorities praised moderation and virtue. The elegiac poet Xenophanes of Colophon is one of them (sixth century BC), fr. 2 West² (transl. Olson):

For now the floor is clean, as are everyone's hands and the cups; (One slave) places woven garlands around (our heads), while another offers us fragrant perfume in a bowl; and a mixing-bowl full of good cheer stands in the middle. ... In the middle is an altar covered on all sides with flowers; song and dance and celebration fill the house. Reasonable men should begin by offering a hymn in the god's honor, using respectable vocabulary and clean words, after they pour a libation and pray for the power to do what is right; for this is what one ought to prefer, rather and ugly words and actions. Then they should drink as much as a person can and still make it home without a servant's assistance, unless he is extremely old. They should also praise the man who behaves well when he drinks, so that excellence is recalled and aspired to

Thus, moral and spiritual authorities make an appeal to the people's conscience. At the same time, latitude is given to the feasters, since it is a time of joy and celebration (Eub. fr. 93).

One way to avoid excess in Greece was to elect a symposiarch, a president of

festivities, from amongst the guests. He was in charge of ensuring that the festivities proceeded in an orderly fashion. He supervised the wine drinking, namely the overall speed of consumption, since he was in charge of deciding the ratio of diluted wine drunk by all attending feasters. However, his election was an optional precaution that seemed to be somewhat outdated in Plutarch's time (Pl. *Smp.* 176e, 213e; Plu. *Mor.* 620a). Nevertheless, we have many examples of symposia that went overboard and finished in drunken riots (*kômoi*), and even in criminal or in sacrilegious acts (Murray, 1990c). In a way, the need to slow down drunkenness and to limit the drinkers' carousing are proof that excess and unruly behavior were quite common and that the consequences were apprehended. Excess could escalate even to smashing clay chamber pots on someone's head (Aesch. fr. 180; Soph. fr. 565).

Xenophanes of Colophon's description of the *symposion* (fr. 2 West²) is traditionally considered a trustworthy depiction of its structure. It is widely acknowledged that the symposium consisted of two parts: an eating part, *deipnon*, followed by a drinking bout, *symposion*, both preceded by the appropriate cleansing and thanksgiving rituals (Nadeau, 2010a, 153–205). Tables were removed between the actual *deipnon* and *symposion* to allow the service personnel to clean up the dining room, since food scraps were thrown on the floor. Afterwards, the tables were put back in with dessert (fruits, cakes, nuts, ...), which were eaten while the guests drank, discussed, watched, or took part in the entertainment provided by the host (for instance see Xen. *Smp.*). The symposium seems to imply the sharing of the same drinking cup between all drinkers, basically from left to right. Toasts and praises could be given at the same occasion (Nadeau, 2010a, 180–9). However, apparently, this custom gradually fell out of fashion after the Classical period, perhaps in the Hellenistic period, since the krater, the mixing bowl in which the common share of wine and water was mixed in advance, seems to disappear (Rostroff, 1996; Dunbabin, 2003, 24). Later evidence indicates that each participant had a personal cup attributed to him, in which each might choose personally the amount of mixed wine desired. From that point forward, there is no clear indication that Greek feasts implied a clear cut division between the *deipnon* and the *symposion* (Plu. *Mor.* 615c–e; Lucian, *Symp.*; Wilkins & Hill, 2006, 182). However, drinking according to the rules was a way to distinguish the drinking etiquette of Greeks and Romans from barbarians and drinkers from other strata of society (Lissarrague, 1990, 10–16; Lenfant, 2002; Garcia Soler, 2010, 46–8).

To know how to eat and drink is common knowledge for all members of a community, but only members of the elite claimed to know how to do these things properly. For instance, a rich freedman like Trimalchio feeds and entertains his guests lavishly – even astonishing and pleasing them with an obscene display of wealth – but only a true aristocrat can claim to know all the subtleness of the etiquette and the art of hospitality (*Od.* 4.26–36).

Petronius' *Satyricon* is the perfect example of Roman aristocrats making fun of the *nouveaux riches* and their attempts to amaze their peers and climb the social ladder. Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* is a good counter-example. Larensis, both a character and probably Athenaeus' *patronus* in real life, is depicted as the perfect Roman aristocrat. He is highly cultivated (Ath. 1.2b–c vs. Petr. 59) and seems to know the thin line between generosity and excessive luxury (Ath. 3c–d, 331b–c, 462c ff. vs. Petr. 32, 38; Xen. *Smp.* 2.1.2–3; Plu. *Mor.* 713c–e; Nadeau, 2010a, 211–6, 393–8).

To conclude, there are no such things as “bad table manners” per se, but only opinion and cultural perception of the way people eat and what they should or should not do. Table manners must be learned and symbolize the people's culture and beliefs. It is typical to consider other social classes and foreigners boorish or ill mannered, since people internalize eating norms to such an extent that they become second nature and cause laughter, discomfort, and incomprehension when they are compared with other habits. To act otherwise than what is customary is often considered unnatural and improper. Incomprehension creates an ideological boundary between people who consider themselves “civilized” and others “uncivilized.” Table manners are a way to understand society and the world, and to distinguish between “us” and “them” (Cic. *Ver.* 2.1.66; Lucian, *Merc. Cond.*; Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 425–70 and in this volume).

FURTHER READING

Table manners have been studied by many scholars since the founding work of Norbert Elias (1939 in German; latest English edition 2000); on table manners in world history, Visser (1991); in Modern Europe, Elias (2000) and Jeanneret (1991); in the Mycenaean world, Wright (2004); in fourth-century Athens, Nadeau (2005); in Greece in the Imperial era, Nadeau (2010a); at the Roman table, Bradley (1998). On the sitting/reclining position in Rome and on social discrimination, D'Arms (1990) and Roller (2006); on cultural interactions between Greece and Persia, Tuplin (2011). For a discussion of the origins of the Greek symposium, see the work of Murray (1994) and Dentzer (1982); see also Schmitt Pantel (2011) and Murray (1983, 1995, 2009) on its evolution and significance. On the evolution of dining layouts, Dunbabin (1998), I. Nielsen (1998), and Morvillez (2005); on Roman feasting, Dunbabin (2003). On the royal banquet in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, an exhaustive study has been made by Vössing (2004). On the manipulation of drinking vessels, Lissarrague (1990) is the main authority. On table manners in the early Christian meal, see the work of Leyerle (1995), Klinghardt (1996), Bradley (1998), and Smith (2003). For a critique of Norbert Elias' hypothesis of the civilizing process of etiquette, Nadeau

(2010a, 36–49); on myths and bad eating behaviors, Schmitt Pantel (2005); on the feast as a place of learning and initiation for the youth, Bremmer (1990) and Booth (1991).

NOTES

- 1 Also *Od.* 17.331–2; Corinthian column-krater, Louvre E.634 = Amyx, 1988, no 234, 2.
- 2 Also Ionian hydria, Rome, Villa Giulia = Berthiaume, 1982, pl. 1–5.1; Attic black-figure olpe, Mus. Univ. of Heidelberg, 253.
- 3 Also Attic black-figure *Hydria*, Berlin Staatl. Mus. F 1890 = ABV 269.34.
- 4 Also Apulian red-figure bell-krater, London BM F 66, *RVAp* I, p. 24 1/106; Attic black-figure skyphos, Athens, NM 12626; Attic black-figure lekythos, New York MM 41.162.29, ABV 507; Attic red-figure krater, Athens NM 14902; Votive relief, Sofia, LIMC IV Herakles 1400; Durand, 1986; van Straten, 1995, 2005, 19; Wolf, 1993, 92–6; Nadeau, 2012b.

CHAPTER 26

Wine Appreciation in Ancient Greece¹

Thibaut Boulay²

“A wine that has neither sweetness nor body, austere, dry, and with a singular power,” ἐστὶ δὲ οὗτος γένος τι οἴνου καὶ ἐστὶν οὗτος οὔτε γλυκὺς οὔτε παχύς, ἀλλ’ αὐστηρὸς καὶ σκληρὸς καὶ δύναμιν ἔχων διαφέρουσιν. These words, which one might think borrowed from the *Wine Advocate* of the American wine critic Robert Parker, are from the historian Eparchides, who lived in the third or second century BC,³ describing the Pramnian wine produced on the island of Ikaros (Ath. 30b–c). He analyses successively the flavor of the wine (its lack of sweetness [γλυκύς], and therefore of residual sugars), its consistency and volume (absence of body),⁴ its harshness or astringency, as well as its vivacity (with the adjectives, αὐστηρός, “dry, rough, harsh,” and σκληρός, “dry, sharp”), and finally its strength (δύναμις), that is to say, the richness of its constitution and its generous alcohol content. Although the nomenclature used by Eparchides to describe this wine of Ikaros presents many analogies with the terms now used in the sensory evaluation of wine, his account, and more generally the practice of tasting wine and its aims in the Greek world from the Archaic period to Roman times, nevertheless occupies a frame of reference completely alien to our own. We propose to outline this frame of reference here, following the lead of Allen Grieco for the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Grieco, 2009). Sacred drink and purveyor of pleasure, wine also occupied a prominent dietary place for its daily caloric contribution. Moreover, wine, sometimes specially prepared, was frequently used as a remedy (φάρμακον) for many ailments. Its intrinsic qualities and medical virtues appear inseparable, as shown in the genesis of some great Greek wines; thus, Pliny reports that the doctor Erasistratus in the third century BC contributed greatly to the reputation of the wines of Thasos (Plin. *Nat.* 14.73), while his brother Cleophrastus became famous for his theory of the use of wine (Plin. *Nat.* 26.14). Wine tasting thus allowed one both to establish a wine’s potential, its organoleptic qualities, and its dietetic or therapeutic properties, and above all to assess if it were suitable for consumption.

Food being an essential factor of health, the examination of wine was based on the principles of Hippocratic medicine, the theory of the four elementary qualities (hot, cold, dry, and wet), and the humors (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm or mucus). Human physiology was thought to be controlled by the elements in their transpositions in organic form, the four humors, each of which corresponded to associations of qualities of a different order: blood was hot and moist, phlegm cold and moist, yellow bile hot and dry, and black

bile cold and dry. In a healthy man, these humors should coexist in a stable relationship; an imbalance in favor of one of the humors, but also climate, the seasons, living conditions, age, and sex, were deemed to affect his disposition (Jouanna, 1992). Starting out balanced, the temperament of an individual could become hot or cold, or dry, or wet, or hot and humid (i.e. sanguine), or cold and dry (bilious or melancholic), and so on. Similarly, illness resulted from a serious imbalance or alteration in the proportions of the cardinal humors (called *δυσκρασία* by Galen); the properties linked with these humors are the hot, the cold, the wet, and the dry. Poor nutrition, according to the Hippocratic tradition, resulted in a secondary production of harmful humors, expelled from the body by natural means (sweat, pus, urine, vomit, etc.). *Dyscrasia* of the humors could be avoided by following a special diet according to the enantiotherapeutic principle. Wine, in this context, held a very important place in the care of the soul and body (Jouanna, 1996), and was generally regarded as a warming and moistening substance. Wine was thus prohibited for children, childhood being characterized by heat and humidity, and considered a remedy (*φάρμακον*) for the aged, who were thought to be cold and dry. Similarly, recourse was had to wine against the melancholic humor. However the color, taste, consistency, bouquet, and age of wines allowed distinctions to be made in choosing a remedy for some physical ailments, or to maintain or restore the balance of the humors. Asclepiades of Bithynia, a doctor of the late second and early first century BC (whose treatise *On Treatment With Wine*, *περὶ οἴνου δόσεως*, a method for caring for the sick using wine, is unfortunately lost), Dioscorides (*Dsc.* 5.7–11), a medical officer of the time of Claudius, and Galen all developed dietetic catalogues adapted to the Hippocratic theory of humors, wherein the use of wine was essential (see also Cels. *De medicina* 2.11–13). Asclepiades even earned the nickname “wine-giver,” *οἰνοδότης*. The makeup of an individual was at least as important as the reputation of a vineyard in choosing a wine for everyday consumption. If the classification of wines of Galen seems primarily determined by strictly medical considerations (although behind the practitioner hides a wine expert in love with Falernian wines; cf. Boudon, 2002), other doctors, such as Erasistratus or Asclepiades, favored the best wines (or those they considered to be the best) as remedies for their patients. Thus, as shown by A. Tchernia with regard to the hierarchy of wines in Rome, classifications of wines by their qualities, and by types adapted to various diseases, were established and evolved along with changes in taste, in part determined by medical recommendations (Tchernia, 1997a). In these dietary catalogues, which assess the degree of humidity (*ὕγρως*), dryness (*ξηρως*), lightness (*κοῦφος*, *ἐλαφρως*), and heaviness (*βαρως*) of a wine, an oenological discourse developed and was enriched, a language of wine whose terms should be considered, as well as a refined, elaborate, and codified art of wine tasting.

Visual Examination

Wines underwent a triple examination, visual, olfactory, and gustatory. According to Galen, visual examination should primarily consider the color (χρῶα) and matter (συστασις) of a wine in order to evaluate its therapeutic uses. Athenaeus, following Hippocrates (Hp. *Acut.* 51–2), accepts only three color categories (Ath. 32c): “Among the wines, there are white wine, claret wine and dark wine. White is by its nature the lightest, diuretic, and hot, and, because it promotes digestion, it sets the head on fire; indeed, this wine tends to rise upwards. Dark wine, when it is not sweet, is the most nourishing and astringent, but even when it is sweet, it is more nutritious than white or claret wine.” The Athenian doctor Mnesitheos (fourth century BC), skilled in treatments with wine, made similar observations: “Black wine is the most nutritious (θρεπτικώτατος), white is the most diuretic and the lightest (οὐρητικώτατος καὶ λεπτότατος), claret wine is dry (ξηρὸς) and makes for better digestion” (Ath. 32d). Galen, classifying wines from least to most warming according to their color, adopts a more precise typology: the yellow (ξανθός), tawny yellow (claret), or amber (κιρρός, or πυρρός ὠχρός), red (ἐρυθρός),⁵ sweet (γλυκὺς, or black, μέλας), and white (λευκός), naturally with intermediate shades (Béguin, 2002, 144).

The transparency and clarity (διάφασις) of a wine, its brilliance, its brightness (λαμπρότης), and its purity (καθαρότης) were all assessed. When a drinker was holding a cup, for example the commonly used *kylix*, he could appreciate the transparency and clarity of the wine by trying to see the inside of the vessel, or any scenes painted on its interior. The iconography of these vessels shows that custom required that one hold the cup by its foot to avoid warming the precious liquid and compromising the olfactory examination (Kourakou-Dragona, 1999, 89–97).

The consistency and viscosity of a wine were also instructive: Aretaeus of Cappadocia (Aret. *CD* 2.3) recommends light (λεπτός) wines for heart disease and advises against the richer wines (the adjective *παχύς* was used, which refers to the content in glycerol, alcohol, and residual sugar). Galen similarly distinguishes aqueous (ὕδατώδης), fluid, light (λεπτός), and full-bodied (παχύς) wines. Oribasius in turn defines as watery a wine “that resembles water in color and consistency” (Orib. *Coll. Med.* 5.6 [Bussemaker Daremborg-I.338]). Apart from these medical assessments, wine lovers generally liked wines that were well clarified, either by fining (*Geop.* 7.22, 28) or by filtering, to remove the lees and aromatic plant residues. Filtering, however threatened to alter the bouquet of the wine (see the arguments of proponents and opponents of filtering in Plu. *Quaest. Conv.* 6.7). As a precaution, one could wait until the last moment to filter the wine by putting a table-sieve (ῥθμός) directly at the guest’s disposal. A pure wine (καθαρός) was distinguished by the absence of any particles in suspension.

The Olfactory Examination

The olfactory examination allowed for the identification of good smelling (εὐώδης) wines, wines with a bouquet (εὔπνους, Ath. 33e), which gave off perfumes of aromatic plants or fragrant oils. Galen distinguishes these from those with a violent and unpleasant odor (Thphr. *Sens.* 85, had earlier indicated, *contra* Arist. 443b9 ff., that odors do not have *species*, but are distinguished only as agreeable or otherwise; cf. Johansen, 1996; Wörhle, 1988). Theophrastus noted that Heraclea wines were “without odor” (Thphr. *Od.* 51; Ath. 32b). These odorless (ἄοδμος) wines could not bear much mixture with water (Orib. *Coll. Med.* 5.6 [Bussemaker Daremberg-I.339], qualifying this type of wine as ὀλιγοφόρος), which caused them to lose their aromatic character. Wine lovers identified, without strictly categorizing, primary (or varietal) aromas, secondary (or fermentational) aromas and tertiary aromas associated with ageing (Gal. *Hipp. vict. acut.*, 3.1), but also aromas specific to a given *terroir* (the place of production); one spoke, thus, of a wine’s “bouquet,” εὐοσμια or εὐοδία.⁶

Wines “exhaling the perfume of the flower,” ἄνθεος ὀζόμενος (Xenoph. ap. Ath. 462d) fell within the second category of aromas. The “flower” of a wine referred to the veil of yeasts that forms on the surface of wines subject to an oxidative fermentation, with air present. These wines develop aromatic characteristics specific to oxidative ageing that S. Kourakou-Dragona has compared to the aroma of an old sherry (Kourakou-Dragona, 1999, 78), and an old wine that smelled of the “flower,” with powerful aromas, hints of nuts, spices and dry fruits, was considered “*anthosmias*.” Devotees knew how to recognize the aromas that betrayed such a wine, which could be mixed. Aristophanes affirmed that the Athenians had a marked preference for “the *Anthosmias*, just at the point when the nectar is distilled” (fr. 688 ap. Ath. 30c).⁷ The smell of apple, reputed to accompany the wine of Thasos (according to the comic Hermippus ap. Ath. 29e), was also typical of wines aged in an oxidative atmosphere under a veil of yeast, which contain free acetaldehyde before they are fully aged (see Kourakou-Dragona, 1999, 122–4). However, this odor indicated, to the informed drinker, a wine that was too young for drinking.

As the Greeks ordered and classified their *grands crus*, they isolated the stable characteristics that allowed for their identification despite variations in quality due to climate. Among these were the tertiary aromas. Connoisseurs recognized in the “wine of the band” (*Tainiôtikos*), in Egypt, “a slightly astringent aroma” (Ath. 33e), which was the signature of that region. During banquets the guests could give free rein to their imagination and use all sorts of references drawn from flowers, fruits, or elsewhere. The Athenian comic author Hermippus, a contemporary of Pericles, has Dionysus extolling the aromas of a wine that is σαπρίαξ – that is to say spoiled, sour, the victim of an alteration caused by acetic bacteria and mold – probably poking fun at his

overly imaginative contemporaries: “One smells violets, one smells roses, one smells hyacinths; a divine odor fills the house up to the high ceiling, of ambrosia and nectar together” (Ath. 29e–f, a passage masterfully elucidated by Kourakou-Dragona, 1999, 125–7). The search for wines with aromatic qualities also spawned numerous treatments for artificially improving the smell (ὄσμῃ/ὄδμῃ) of wines (Pamphilos *Geop.* 7.20). It was sometimes sufficient to pour aged, strongly scented wine into an amphora containing a younger wine of no odor to deceive the customer (Florentinus *Geop.* 7.7.5). Some flavored preparations, listed by Dioscorides and still popular in the tenth century when the *Geoponica* were compiled, were prized for their medicinal properties (Garzya, 2002), including wine made with roses (οἶνος ῥοδιτης), dill (ἀνθηθιτης), anise (ἀνισιτης), pear (ἄπιτης), quince (διὰ μήλων), wormwood (ἄψινθιτης), black hellebore (οἶνος καθαρτικός), and so on.

At the banquet, the aroma of the wine mingled with the smell of the garlands worn by the guests, which were reputed to relieve headache (κεφαλαλγία). It was therefore important carefully to choose the plants that made up these crowns, so as not to interfere with the tasting. Some, like ivy, had the virtue of driving out drunkenness (see the discussion on the hot or cold nature of ivy in Plu. *Quaest. Conv.* III, Q. 2). Philonides of Catana, author of a treatise *On Garlands and Perfumes*, related “That is why the myrtle crown was invented, which, indeed, has some astringent quality, and can dissipate the fumes of wine: these are also made from roses. Still, this garland quiets headaches a little and provides some refreshment. And the laurel wreath is also no stranger to drinking parties; but one should keep well away from the wallflower as regards the head, and marjoram, and any others that may cause drowsiness, or any sort of heaviness in the head” (Ath. 675e). The use of perfume having likely been widespread at banquets (see Nadeau, 2010a, 373–9), drinkers would have also preferred fragrances suitable for wine drinking. Athenaeus provides valuable information in his book on perfumes (from the doctor Hicesius): “As for the virtues of perfumes, that of roses, as well as that of myrtle and quince, are good when one drinks. This last is a good digestive and useful in cases of lethargy. The perfume of *oenanthe* is also digestive and helps maintain lucidity. Those of wild thyme and marjoram are suitable when you want to drink, as well as that of saffron, but without much myrrh. That of styrax resin and spikenard are useful for the same purposes. The scent of fenugreek is soft and delicate. As for the wallflower, it has a pleasant smell, and aids the digestion” (Ath. 689c–d). Finally, rubbing perfume on the head had the same virtue, of promoting the digestion of wine by hydrating the head and thus fighting against the vapors rising to the brain (Philonides ap. Ath. 691f–692b).

To fully appreciate the aromas of a wine, drinkers should ensure that it is served at the proper temperature for tasting. Indeed, a temperature too cold brings out the bitterness of a wine, while at too high a temperature, the aromas

are inhibited, perfumes disappear, and one cannot prevent the extraction of heavy, unpleasant aromatic elements. The temperature of the wine was thus controlled by a wine cooler (ψυκτήρ), a container packed with snow, or by means of double-walled vessels (Kourakou-Dragona, 1999, 100–7).

The Examination by Taste

Although the Greeks attached great importance to the bouquet, it was by bringing the wine to his lips that the drinker could fully assess its consistency, its constitution, and its richness, related to its content in dry extract and glycerine, and appreciate its flavors, its wholesomeness or its harmfulness. The Galen of Athenaeus celebrates the virtues of an εὔστομος wine, “pleasant on the palate” (Ath. 27c), and enjoys a wine that is “finely textured,” λεπτομερέστερος (Ath. 26e), which has less effect on the head. Wines served too warm, and therefore κεφαλαλγικοί, “headache-giving,” are held in dread (Ath. 26c).

The Greeks characterized eight basic tastes, as evidenced by a passage of Aristotle (Arist. *De An.* 2.10 [422b 10–14], see also Thphr. *PC* 6.1.1). There are simple flavors that are opposed to each other, τὸ γλυκὺ, sweet and τὸ πικρὸν, bitter, and those that derive from these, τὸ λιπαρὸν, unctuous, which is derived from sweet, and τὸ ἄλμυρὸν, salty, derived from bitter. Finally, there are intermediate flavors: τὸ δριμύ, sharp, τὸ αὔστηρὸν, astringent, τὸ στρυφνόν, harsh, and τὸ ὀξύ, acid (see Cootjans, 1994). Aristotle thus describes a scale of flavors that can be represented along a single axis:⁸

The sweet, τὸ γλυκὺ
The unctuous, τὸ λιπαρὸν
The sharp, τὸ δριμύ
The astringent, τὸ αὔστηρὸν
The harsh, τὸ στρυφνόν
The acid, τὸ ὀξύ
The salty, τὸ ἄλμυρὸν
The bitter, τὸ πικρὸν



Sweet and bitter correspond in this way to simple colors, white and black (Arist. *Sens.* 4.442a 17–19). Drinkers would refer to this one-dimensional continuum of flavors to differentiate wines. Oribasius notes that aqueous wine (οἶνον ὑδατώδη) “has neither astringency nor bitterness nor sweetness nor

sharpness,” μήτε αὐστηρότητα μήτε στρυφνότητα μήτε γλυκύτητα μήτε δριμύτητα κατὰ τὴν γεύσιν (Orib. *Coll. Med.* 5.6 [Bussemaker Daremberg-I.339]). In his account of the looting of provisions that the Greeks found among the Mossynoeci, Xenophon notes: “We also found wine; taken neat, it seemed too acid because of its astringency; tempered, it was fragrant and pleasant,” οἶνος δὲ ἡύρισκετο ὃς ἄκρατος μὲν ὄξυς ἐφαίνετο εἶναι ὑπὸ τῆς αὐστηρότητος, κερασθεὶς δὲ εὐώδης τε καὶ ἡδύς (Xen. *An.* 5.4.29). On the island of Chios, the wine-growing region of Ariousa (toward the northwest tip of the island) produced three types of Ariousios: “one is dry (αὐστηρός), the other has a sweet taste (γλυκάζων), and the one that is intermediate between those for taste is called αὐτόκρατος (that is to say, mixed with itself, and drunk neat)” (Ath. 32f). Similarly, there were two varieties of Alban wine, “one sweet and one sour,” ὃ μὲν γλυκάζων, ὃ δ' ὀμφακίας (Ath. 26d). Verjuice, wine made with unripe grapes (ὄμφαξ), was characterized by its bitterness, πικρία (A. A. 970). In his treatise on antidotes, Galen states that “the wines of Tibur and the Marsi are astringent (αὐστηροί) and easily become acidic (ὀξυνόμενοι) when stored in an inappropriate place” (Gal. *Antid.* 1.3). The basic flavors are combined in various proportions to form all the others (Arist. *Sens.* 4.442a 13–19). Hermippus (ap. Ath. 29e) thus qualifies the wine of Magnesia, in Thessaly, as μελιχόδριμος, “pungent and sweet.”⁹ A numerically regular and harmonious balance distinguished an enjoyable wine, a good balance of flavors being able to guarantee its stability (μονιμότης). Galen, a lover of Falernian wine, describes it (among others) as stable, μόνιμος (Boudon, 2002). No one of its components seemed to dominate this wine, and it gave the Pergamene doctor a balanced and harmonious intensity of experience.

The range of Greek tasting thus exceeded the narrow confines of four primary flavors defined in the nineteenth century by the physiologist Adolf E. Fick (1864): sweet, salty, bitter, and sour. It actually seems fairly modern in view of the latest research findings on the physiology of taste, which show in particular that taste is a complex sensation, incorporating gustatory, olfactory (including the retronasal; see the discussion of the similarities between odors and flavors, Johansen, 1996; Wöhrle, 1988) and somatosensory elements (that is to say, the thermal sensitivities, tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive, cf. Faurion, 2000). There is an interaction between perceptions of taste and the texture of foods, so the gustatory, olfactory, and somatosensory perceptions are not really separable. The Greeks were not wrong when they described a wine like the Caecuban as “striking the senses” (πληκτικός) (Ath. 27a). The Aristotelian approach, a one-dimensional continuum of flavors punctuated by gustatory and tactile semantic descriptors such as τὸ λιπαρόν, a term that refers to both gustatory and tactile sensations and is one of the basic tastes, thus comes as no surprise. Similarly, astringency is the sensation of a dry mouth caused by contraction of the mucous membranes, notably under the effect of certain tannins in wine. The model of Aristotle, which anticipates the

“Kontinuierliche Reihe” sensory continuum of the German psychologist Hans Henning (1916), arranged around four semantic descriptors (sweet, salty, sour, bitter), is, as shown by Annick Faurion (2000), strongly charged with hedonic meaning. The earlier dichotomy of Aristotle, sweet and bitter, confuses taste quality and intensity on the one hand, and the parameters of preference on the other, distinguishing the “good” (sweet, unctuous) from the “bad” (sour, salty, bitter). As today, drinkers had a tendency to find what they did not like “sour,” the mental analogy being based on a hedonic rather than a qualitative criterion (Faurion, 1988). The most famous wines of the Greek world were precisely the sweet wines, γλυκεῖς, obtained through natural concentration in grapes left to dry either on the vine or on racks, such as Thasian, Chian, or the Maronean wines (Boulay, 2012).

The eight milestones of the Aristotelian realm of flavors also have a close correspondence to the theory of primary and physical qualities, and with the theory of the humors, an essential paradigm of medical practice. They allow categorization of wines according to their therapeutic virtues, in a terminology outside the field of hedonic tasting. The wine of Tivoli, which the Galen of Athenaeus calls αὔστηρος, is εὐδιάπνευστος, “easy-breathing” (Ath. 26e). A sweet wine is often εὐστόμακος, “good for the stomach” (see, e.g., Ath. 27a; 27c). It was also thought that an astringent had the virtue of refreshing when taken in moderation, and thus soothed the stomach (Plu. *Quaest. Conv.* III, Q. 5). Thus ivy was used for cooling because it was astringent, while vinegar was considered too cold. Scented wines acquired the properties of plants used in their manufacture. Wine made with myrtle, a cold plant with a “bitter flavor and good for the stomach,” στυπτικὸς καὶ εὐστόμακος (Dsc. 5.36; Orib. *Coll. Med.* 5.25 [Bussemaker Daremberg-I.402]), or wine scented with wormwood, prevented drunkenness if consumed beforehand (Dsc. 5.49). It should be noted that the τὸ γλυκὺ–τὸ πικρὸν scale does not correspond to a hot–cold scale. Galen in fact states that wines should be considered according to five categories (Béguin, 2002, 144–6): color (see above), taste, constitution, bouquet, and quality (relative strength). Finally, these characteristics changed as a function of ageing, which was often necessary for the wine to be considered drinkable, πότιμος (Ath. 26d).¹⁰

Galen also systematized the classification of wines and foods in developing the theory of degrees (τάξεις) (on the work of this second founder of medicine, cf. Gill, Whitmarsh, & Wilkins, 2009). Sweet wine belonged to a first degree of heat, while older wines were considered hot in the third degree (Béguin, 2002, 146–7). This theory would have governed the preparation of the flavored wines mentioned above. Wine with thyme, a hot and dry plant in the third degree (on a scale of four), made with sweet wine, hot in the first degree, was thus indicated for poor digestion, torpor of the nerves, winter chills, and venomous animals (Dsc. 5.59).

The Language of Wine

Drinkers were not content to draw on the specific vocabulary of flavors, referring to identified and catalogued sensory perceptions, to express their taste impressions (on the language of wine in general, see the work of Coutier (2007), whose typology of metaphorical fields underlying the terminology of taste I adopt). There are already laudatory epithets for wine in Homer (Arnould, 2002): it “brings joy” (εὐφρων, *Il.* 3246), “increases strength” (εὐήνωρ, *Od.* 4622), is “sweet as honey” (μελιηδής, e.g. *Il.* 4346), “pleasant” (ἡδύς, e.g. *Od.* 2350), and “drinkable” (ἡδύποτος, *Od.* 15, 507). It is enough to listen to Galen, a guest at Athenaeus’ *Banquet of the Sophists* (*Deipnosophistai*), to be convinced that wine lovers, or at least the most well-off and learned of them, following the poet, deployed all the resources of a rich eloquence of tropes and metaphors in discussing their favorite drink (Ath. 26c–27d).

Metaphors of spatial reality are very present in the Greek vocabulary of wine tasting. Perceptions produced by wine held and swished around in the mouth for a few moments are assimilable to impressions of shape, volume, and consistency (Coutier, 1994). Thus, a richly constituted wine which gives an impression of substance and volume in the mouth is called παχύς.

Intersensory or synaesthetic metaphors were also in use. The weakness of a “delicate,” τρυφερός, wine such as the otherwise-unknown Erbulean, or a “tender,” ἀπαλός, wine such as the Tarantine, is to be regretted (Ath. 27c). A wine “lacking in softness,” (ἀλιπής), such as a very young Sorrentine wine, which gives an impression of hardness in the mouth through an excess of acidity, is described as “harsh,” ψαφαρός (Ath. 26d). Metaphors of material properties can describe the composition of a wine. The adjective κοῦφος, like λεπτός, is often derogatory, denoting a wine lacking alcohol and body (such as the Erbulean), but it can also be used to describe a wine that, if low in alcohol, is balanced and pleasant to drink, like the Mamertine (Ath. 27d), which is “lively” (εὐτονος).

Not surprisingly, anthropomorphic metaphors are one of the richest sources of the vocabulary of taste impressions. Analogy with the human body can put the feelings of fullness and consistency due to the presence of dry extract and glycerine into words (Coutier, 1994). A “puny” (ἀσθενής, Ath. 26c) wine may be contrasted with a “fleshy” wine (σαρκώδης, Ath. 27c). The presence of alcohol is translated by the idea of tone. The Gauranian, the Caecuban, and the Fondian are thus tonic wines, described as “taut” (εὐτονοί, Ath. 26f–27a). There is also talk of strong, robust wines, ἰσχυροί, or of powerful wines, κραταιοί, to mark the intense richness of their constitution and generous alcohol content. Since Homer, erudite observers had described a powerful (δυναμικός, *Geop.* 6.2.3, 7.3.2) wine, with plenty of alcohol, which provided a warm feeling (Ath. 26b), as “ardent,” αἵθοψ. A wine without vigor, ἄτονος, such as the Italian Sabine wine, was a wine lacking in alcohol, but perhaps

also in acidity.

Conclusion

This synchronic approach to wine tasting in ancient Greece confirms, if such confirmation were needed, that the Greeks, or at least the most affluent and educated of them, attached great importance to the organoleptic characteristics of wine, particularly its qualities of smell and taste. This appreciation, which gave birth to and developed a specific vocabulary, was above all hedonic before becoming analytical. In the seventh century BC, the poet Alcman noted that one of the *terroirs* of Laconia, the “Five Hills,” produced wines smelling of the “flower,” ἄνθεος ὄσδοντά (Ath. 31c). The parodic description of wines of the comic poet Hermippus (Ath. 29e–f) shows, behind the satire, the sophistication of Athenian wine lovers at the time of Pericles (Kourakou-Dragona, 1999, 120–8). Meanwhile, the success of the theory of elements and elemental qualities, and its application in medicine, gave the practitioners of wine tasting an interpretive framework that quickly established itself, without however restricting the imagination of the drinkers, since taste impressions are not backed by an objective referential reality. Democritus also expressed the important role played by subjectivity, noting that “What is sweet for us will be bitter for others, acidic to these, pungent or astringent to those, etc.” Ἄλλ' ὃ ἡμῖν γλυκὺ, τοῦτ' ἄλλοις πικρὸν καὶ ἑτέροις ὄξυ καὶ ἄλλοις δριμύ τοῖς δὲ στρυφνὸν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα δ' ὡσαύτως (according to Thphr. *Sens.* 63). Beyond the great differences in individual sensibilities, exaggerated by the disciple of Aristotle¹¹ but scientifically proven (Faurion, 2000), analysis of the specific vocabulary for expressing the taste of wine among the Greeks nevertheless reveals a multimodal system of semantic descriptors much less reductionist than the notion of the four basic qualities that emerged in the nineteenth century. Moreover, wine-tasting practitioners enriched the Greek vocabulary of wine very early on through making use of the metaphorical process, enhancing its cognitive function, notably essential in the context of banqueting. This must have seemed entirely satisfactory, because, from the Republican era onward, the Romans adopted the “canonical vocabulary of wine tasting” previously developed by the Greeks (Tchernia, 1997a, 1257).

FURTHER READING

The history of taste has been attracting more and more attention from researchers since the pioneering publications on the history of food and eating practices, in particular those of Flandrin (1993a, 1993b), Flandrin and Montanari (1996), Redon, Sallmann, & Steinberg (2005), and Grieco (1990, 2009). Faurion (2000) offers an accessible synthesis of the latest research on the physiology of taste. On taste and tasting wine, the essential works of Vedel *et al.* (1972) and Peynaud (1980) are a necessary starting point. On the

(French) language of wine and (French) vocabulary of wine tasting, the study of the linguist M. Coutier, especially Coutier (1994, 2007), may be consulted with profit.

Surprisingly, no general study has been devoted to the vocabulary of wine tasting in ancient Greece. For the study of wine in ancient times, see the work of Brun and Tchernia, who favor the Roman world (Tchernia, 1986, 1997a; Brun and Tchernia, 1999; Brun, 2003, 2004b). See also the very suggestive book of Kourakou-Dragona (1999) on Greek wine and its consumption, and more generally the work of McGovern (2003) on the nature of wines in antiquity. Billiard (1913) remains a work of great value, even if it is beginning to show its age. On the Aristotelian view of sensory physiology, see the work of Cootjans (1994), which is a useful survey of sources and vocabulary. On smell in Aristotle, see Cappelletti (1977) and Johansen (1996). On the senses of taste and smell in Theophrastus, see Sharples (1985) and Wörhle (1988). On the use of wine in medicine in antiquity and the characteristics attributed to it by doctors, see the work of Jouanna (1996) and the conference proceedings of Jouanna and Villard (2002). On Hippocrates, see Jouanna (1992, 1996); on Galen, see Béguin (2002), Boudon (2002), and Gill, Whitmarsh, & Wilkins (2009). For other sources, particularly on the crucial Athenaeus, see the work of Braund & Wilkins (2000) and Wilkins (2002).

NOTES

- 1 Translated by Nicholas Banner.
- 2 I would like to thank John Wilkins and Robin Nadeau, who gave me the opportunity to write down lectures presented to students of the International Food History Master's degree offered at the Vrije Universiteit of Brussels, in October 2011. My sincere thanks to Martine Coutier and Allen Grieco, whose works and papers at the Ninth annual Summer School organized in 2011 by the Université François-Rabelais de Tours and the European Institute of the History and Culture of Food (IEHCA) deeply influenced this chapter.
- 3 His works are known to us only through quotations found in Athenaeus: 30b–e and 61a–b. On Eparchides and his works, a possible *History of Ikaros*, see Jacoby (1905) col. 2715 and *FGrH* 437. An honorific decree was voted by the Samians living at Oinè in honor of a person named Eparchides (second century BC). He received a gold crown and an *eikon* made of bronze. They might be the same person: see Matthaiou (1999). On the Pramnian wine of which the inhabitants of Ikaros boasted, see Papalas (1982–83).
- 4 I translate “παχύς” by “body” rather than by “thickness,” since this term evokes the wine's structure; it implies a tasting sensation in the mouth and

the notion of volume.

- 5 Greeks did not know the technique of the maceration of must with raisin marc. Therefore, ancient red wines would not be similar to the ones we know today. It is then surprising that Thasian and Maronean wines were sometimes described as red wines and dark wines. We can presume that they did not use coloring grape varieties, i.e. red juice grape varieties with low natural sweetening agents, which cannot be used to make sweet wines. Even in the cases of grapes with a red skin, the *passerillage* needed for the creation of Thasian and Maronean wines would not create enough coloring agents such as the anthocyanins under the skin that can hardly be dissolved in must or water. The amber-like color of these wines can be explained only by the maceration of the grape-skins in the wine press and during the pressing period or by wine conservation in an oxidizing environment.
- 6 See in particular this entry in the Suidas, s.v. Ἀνθοσμίας: εὐώδης οἶνος. εὖοσμος. ἀπὸ τόπου Ἀνθοσμίου: ἢ ὡς ἀπὸ εἰδους ἀμπέλου, ἢ ἡδὺς καὶ περίοσμος καὶ ἀνθηρός. Ἀνθοσμίας, εὐώδης οἶνος, ἐγκειμένου τοῦ ἄνθους καὶ τῆς ὁσμῆς. παραγωγὸς Ἀνθόσμιος, Ἀνθοσμίας: τὸν δὲ χυδαῖον οἶνον κερηβαρίτην ἔλεγον, “Anthosmias. A wine with a sweet-smelling odor. Sweet-smelling odor. From a place called Anthosmion; or a particular grape variety, or a sweet, fragrant flowery smell. Anthosmias, a sweet-smelling wine, fragrant and full of flower smell. By extension, from Anthomios comes Anthosmias. It is common to give that name to a coarse wine that causes headaches.”
- 7 Dalby (2003b) 13, s.v. *Anthosmias*, proposes that Aristophanes’ (*Ra.* 1150; *Pl.* 807) and Xenophon’s (*HG* 6.2.6) allusions to *anthosmias* refer to the well-known custom of adding sea water to wine, as mentioned by Phaenias of Eresus (fr. 41 Wehrli = Ath. 31f). However, no elements seem to confirm his interpretation. It would be logical that the Spartan navarch Mnasippos’ mercenaries, who, after the end of peace in 373, invaded and plundered Corcyra (“well-sowed and well-harvested territory with sumptuous habitations and storehouses full of wine in the country”), “wanted to drink nothing but Anthosmias,” because this “sweet-smelling” wine was a great wine, a wine that could age well *sous-voile*. It was not a common wine, as the *tethalassomenoi* wines usually were. Furthermore, when Karion in Aristophanes’ *Wealth* talks about the wealth of his master, Chremylus, he mentions his amphorae filled with a flowery dark wine (οἶνου μέλανος ἀνθοσμίου).
- 8 Tchernia (in Brun and Tchernia, 1999, 44) singles out three flavors from Galen’s testimony that illustrate the balance of flavors with a triangular diagram inspired by the one established by André Vedel (Vedel *et al.*, 1972) and used by E. Peynaud (1980); see also Béguin (2002) 144–5, for a similar interpretation. I consider that this paradigm implies a gradation of

flavors on a two-dimensional scale that is too simplistic. Fahd (1973, 329) propose another classification: sweet, unctuous, sharp, rough, spicy (he translated the word δριμύς as “acrid”), salty, sour, and acidic. In his treatise *Sense and Sensibilia*, Aristotle gives the order of intermediary flavors: ὁ δὲ δριμύς καὶ αὐστηρὸς καὶ στρυφνὸς καὶ ὀξύς ἀνὰ μέσον (Arist. *Sens.* 442a 19). Besides, Béguin (2002) notes that the words αὐστηρὸς and στρυφνός in Galen “have similar meanings: what is considered αὐστηρὸς is moderately sharp (μετρίως στῦφον) and στρυφνός is strongly sharp (βιαίως) and mighty sharp (σφοδρῶς)”.

- 9 See the edition of Desrousseaux (1956). According to Kourakou-Dragona (1999, 122), “this type of flavor comes in certain wines that contain large quantities of mannitol, which gives a very sweet flavor, and acetic acid, which gives vinegar-like sharpness. This chemical composition comes from a bacterial reaction called ‘mannitol fermentation’. It happens when the climatic conditions of specific years contribute to a more advanced ripeness of the grapes with a low level of acidity and high temperatures”.
- 10 Thphr. *CP* 6.6.4 describes this evolution over time: “at the beginning, it is watery, then it becomes sharp, then acidic and finally sweet (τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον ὥσπερ ὕδατώδης γίνεται μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα στρυφνὸς εἶτ’ ὀξύς εἶτ’ ἔσχατον γλυκύς).” According to Galen, this process goes slightly differently. Young wines lose their astringency and acquire sweetness and acidity. As the acidity goes up, they lose their sweetness gradually. This acidity sometimes yields to bitterness (Béguin, 2002, 146).
- 11 Theophrastus made the opposite demonstration a little further: “but if the sweetness and bitterness are not perceived by everyone the same way, the nature of what is bitter and sweet still remains the same for all, which Democritus himself seems to say. Because how could what is perceived as bitter by us be considered sweet or sour by others, if there were no preexistent nature for all these flavors?” (Thphr. *Sens.* 70).

PART 4

Cultures Beyond Athens and Rome

CHAPTER 27

Food, Culture, and Environment in Ancient Asia Minor

Stephen Mitchell

Asia Minor, modern Turkey, is a fantastically diverse and complex natural environment, a virtual subcontinent stretching from the Aegean to the highlands of Armenia beyond the Euphrates, from the northern edge of the Fertile Crescent in Syria, to the Black Sea. The highlands of the interior – Phrygia, Galatia, Lycaonia, Cappadocia – with their sparse, sometimes steppic landscapes, are separated from the Black Sea and Mediterranean zones by high mountain ranges, which not only restrict access from north and south, but also create a much harsher environmental and climatic zone than in the coastal regions (Mitchell, 19931–10).

Since the origin of domestication and the first fixed agricultural settlements, which emerged in upper Mesopotamia during the ninth and eighth millennia BC, grain and cereal products provided the basis for every diet at every level of ancient society, and would have been grown in all parts of Asia Minor, as far as conditions allowed.¹ Against this background it is still worth emphasizing that grain was a staple in the landscapes of the interior of Asia Minor, which have been dominated by rural, village settlements until very recent times. In late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey up till the later twentieth century, rural outnumbered urban populations by a ratio of 10:1.² The importance of cereal crops in central Anatolia is repeatedly emphasized by the dedications that villagers set up, especially to Zeus, in gratitude for or in expectation of a good harvest. Their steles commonly display an ear or sheaf of ripe corn.

It is no surprise that ancient writers provide us with quite detailed information about cereal types that could be grown under relatively unfavorable conditions in the interior of Anatolia: various spelt wheats (*zea*, *olyra*, *typhe*) were to be found in the east according to the elder Pliny (*Nat.* 18.81). Galen, in a particularly specific passage, explains that a hardy strain of spelt, *zeopyron*, thrived in the territories of Bithynian Nicaea and Prusa and extended into the highlands around Claudipolis, Creteia, Juliopolis, and Dorylaeum, that is across the borders into Galatia and Phrygia. Barley was also an important crop in Bithynia (*Xen. An.* 6.4.6) and in Cappadocia (*Gal. De alim. fac.* 1.13.22). Millet and sorghum were specialties of the Pontic region (*Str.* 13.3.15). These were all relatively poor quality cereals that made a coarse bread suitable for village consumption, but largely unwelcome to city dwellers, who preferred white bread made from triticum wheat. The latter was a thirsty crop (*Plin. Nat.*

18.85), which required higher rainfall than was common in most of inner Anatolia. In a well-known passage Galen observed that the country dwellers in the Mysian country behind Pergamum, one of the least favored areas of western Asia Minor, cultivated *zea* and *olyra* spelt varieties for their own consumption, since the wheat all had to be provided to the city (Gal. *De alim. fac.* 1.13, 18). Nevertheless each region could develop its own specialties, and we learn from Athenaeus that Cappadocia was known for the variety of its plaited loaves (Ath. 647c), as well as for a white bread, made with a little milk, oil, and salt, which was known for its softness (Ath. 113b). Its attraction may nonetheless have been limited, as the guests at the glittering wedding of the Macedonian Karanos, offered Cappadocian bread on silver dishes, took only some for themselves before passing the rest to their servants (Ath. 129e). At the beginning of his geographical account of Cappadocia, Strabo remarked that it was excellent for agriculture, especially cereals, and for stock, but despite its southerly location the region was cold, and its western section, the plain of Bagadonia, in the northern shadow of the Taurus mountains, hardly produced any fruit trees (Str. 12.2.10).

The further east one travels across Asia Minor, as the mean altitude rises, the poorer the landscape appears, until relief is provided by the great incision of the upper Euphrates valley. Here substantial areas of rich, well-watered country occupy the valleys that flow into the Euphrates from the west. Around Melitene, Strabo noted that the whole country, uniquely in Cappadocia, was planted with trees and could produce wine and olive oil *à la grecque* (Str. 12.2.1).

Even more striking was Melitene's southern neighbor, the blooming late Hellenistic kingdom of Commagene, whose agricultural abundance is celebrated in the inscriptions of its great king Antiochus I, and which he himself referred to as his *patris pantrophos Kommagene*.³ Antiochus created a unique form of theocratic rule involving feasts and celebrations at his kingdom's "sacred seats," *hierotheresia* – apparently a term that he coined and is only found in the inscriptions that he and his successor set up. The reward for the king's piety had been its extraordinary prosperity, which enabled the kings to erect the magnificent monuments of Commagene on Nemrud Dağ and in the surrounding royal centers and burial places. According to the royal sacred law, the priest of Antiochus' cult was to celebrate his birthdays with abundant sacrifices to the gods, the tables in the sanctuary should be laden with food appropriate to the occasion, and there should be a limitless quantity of craters of watered wine. The entire population of the country was invited to enjoy the shared delights of the feast. This paradisiacal scene was made possible not only by the abundant fertility of richly watered Commagene, but also by the king's own good fortune in avoiding the costs and damage of warfare, which blighted the prospects of most Hellenistic kingdoms. The idyll did not last. After Antiochus' death the kingdom declined rapidly as Roman pressure

and demands increased, Antiochus' successors were expelled during a campaign led by Vespasian's generals, and Commagene's productivity was drained and channeled to supply the Roman garrisons of the Euphrates *limes*.⁴

Turning back to western Anatolia, the picture is quite different, a contrast no less apparent today than in antiquity. The main river valleys here were hugely productive: the Caicus flowing past Pergamum, the Hermus, which waters the Lydian plain around Sardis, the Cayster (the little Maeander), which reaches the sea at Ephesus, and above all the great Maeander river and its tributary the Lycus, which ran through the territory of some of the largest cities of ancient Anatolia, including Laodicea, Hierapolis, Nysa, Tralles, Magnesia ad Maeandrum, and Miletus. These river basins and the mountain ranges that framed them not only provided extensive well-watered land for agriculture and grazing, but also acted as trade corridors, along which goods could be readily transported. The close proximity of low-lying irrigable land to accessible highlands, which were also fit for fruit trees, olive culture, grazing, and other agriculture, enabled the development of a rich, interactive economy, in which the abundant produce of the countryside could feed burgeoning urban populations. Only slightly less successful, and for similar reasons, were the cities of Bithynia in the northwest, around the basin of the Sangarius river, and of Pamphylia, the southern enclave between the Taurus mountains and the sea.⁵

Geography and environment set the stage, but do not determine the economic history and productivity of a region. Ancient Asia Minor was also subject to the impact of empire. Food production and consumption were profoundly affected by the changing political and cultural conditions created first by the Persians in the classical period, by the Greeks after Alexander in the Hellenistic age, and ultimately by the Romans after Augustus. The political evolution of Asia Minor from the western satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire, to the kingdoms and above all the fast developing city culture of the Hellenistic age, and to the integration of this Hellenized Anatolia into the provincial administrative structures of the Roman Empire, can also be followed in the cultural transformation of food production and consumption, a story that can be traced here only by a small selection of examples.

We can begin the story with an anecdote that shows the Persian influence, and focuses attention on one of Asia Minor's most fertile regions, the lower Maeander valley.⁶ In the later years of his life Themistocles, ostracized from Athens by his fellow-citizens and a fugitive in Greece, fled to Persia and became a trusted agent of King Artaxerxes. He settled at Magnesia on the Maeander, where, according to Plutarch, he became mighty and was attended by many courtiers. It was at a splendid banquet there that he explained the paradox of his life to his children, that he would have been ruined now [by the Persian king], had he not been ruined before [by his Greek fellow countrymen]. The luxury and plenty at his disposal were a matter for general

comment. Writers, beginning with Thucydides, reported that three cities had been given to him, Magnesia for his bread, Lampsacus for his wine, and Myous for his savory food (Th. 1.138; Plu. *Life of Themistocles* 29.7). Food and dining are at the heart of these anecdotes. Plutarch envisaged the ageing and corpulent Themistocles lording it at his table. His domains in western Asia Minor were defined in terms of the provisions that they supplied to his banquets. These stories also reflected institutional realities of the Persian empire. Workers at different levels were paid in rations.⁷ The great king's subjects would be given notice in advance to supply his banquets, with wheat and barley flour, slaughtered animals specially fattened for the occasion, game birds from the land and the lakes, and all the fine tableware that the occasion demanded (Hdt. 7.118–20). Before (and alongside) coinage, food was part of the currency of the empire. We need also to remember that Themistocles was not the only wealthy grandee of this region. The wealthiest man in Asia at the time of Xerxes' expedition against Greece was Pythios (Hdt. 7.27–8) or Pythes (Plu. *Mor.* 262d), whose landholdings in the Maeander valley yielded produce on a scale that enabled him, supposedly single-handedly, to support the passage of the Persian king's army.

Magnesia and Myous, both members of the original group of 12 Ionian cities in Asia Minor, were situated at the edge of an extraordinarily productive region, the lower Maeander valley. Myous, cut off from the sea as the lower course of the river silted up, was abandoned and absorbed by its neighbor Miletus in the Hellenistic period. It is worth noting that the new land produced by the river silt was not well suited to agriculture, and this new Milesian territory was, and is, largely used for grazing (see Thonemann, 2011, 295–338). However, by the second century AD, the valley north and east of Miletus supported huge populations in some of the largest cities of Asia: Magnesia, Tralles, Nysa, Antioch on the Maeander, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. The great fluvial basin between the Lycus valley at Laodicea and the Maeander at Magnesia, and the mountain slopes, especially north of the river, were exploited intensively for fruit and vegetable production destined for the city markets and for export.⁸ The earliest documentation for this dates even before the time of Themistocles, the letter from King Darius, sent to Gadatas in the late sixth or early fifth century BC, but reinscribed under the Roman empire at Magnesia. Darius congratulated his “slave” Gadatas, one of his local financial officials, for successfully introducing tree species from east of the Euphrates to a new habitat around Magnesia. We might reasonably imagine that these were peach trees, *mela Persika*, or other fruiting species new to the region. At the same time the king ordered that the cultivators of sacred land (*phytourgoi hieroi*) attached to a sanctuary of Apollo at Aliai should not be required to pay tribute, or liable to provide *corvée* labor on secular territory.⁹ The term *phytourgoi* indicates that the beneficiaries were not ordinary peasant cultivators, but gardeners, engaged, no doubt, in the transplantation of Persian fruiting trees, which Darius had commended.

The inscription shows the introduction of Persian arboriculture to western Asia Minor, leading to a permanent enrichment of its agricultural potential. By the second century AD, when the letter to Gadatas was re-inscribed, no doubt to re-affirm the rights of the cultivators still attached to the temple of Apollo, we know that gardeners' associations (*sumbioseis kepoureon*) were among the groups that had reserved places in the huge stadium at Magnesia on the Maeander, currently under excavation. The smallholders in the city's territory were thus organized into collectives, with a fixed place in the city's social structure and hierarchy. They were a social and economic force to be reckoned with. Some idea of land holding and exploitation in the area in the fourth century AD comes from late Roman tax registers for Magnesia, also inscribed, which reveal a high predominance of small and middle-sized land-holdings in the city territory (Thonemann, 2007). They were surely the descendants of the second-century smallholders, and in both periods this solid middle class would have been the engine room of Magnesia's prosperity. We may suppose that Persian landholders elsewhere were similarly engaged in enriching and diversifying the rural environment in their own way, as the wealth that they accumulated was not channeled into cities, but available for recycling on their estates in Lydia (Sekunda, 1985), at Dascylium near Cyzicus (Sekunda 1988), or on their highland Cappadocian properties.¹⁰

What changes did Hellenization bring? Wine and olive oil were Greek, not Persian specialties, although the prehistory of both products reaches back to far earlier Anatolian history. The viticulture of western Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean islands is well known and richly documented (Broughton, 1938, 609–11). Many local varieties were prized for their distinctive qualities, and surely gained prestige because the producers had access to excellent markets and discerning consumers in the major cities in and outside Asia Minor. Country regions noted for their vintages developed local wine festivals, such as the *oinoposia* that are found in the southern part of Nicomedia's territory, which took place at night and involved bands of professional musicians (TAM IV.1 nos 15–20). Similar rural festivals occur south of Cyzicus in Mysia.

However, wine growing becomes culturally more revealing when it occurs in environments that were only lightly touched by Hellenism. As already noted, Strabo, himself from Amaseia in northeastern Anatolia, remarked with pride that Cappadocian Melitene's "*monarites*" grape rivaled the best Greek vintages, and certainly helped qualify the place itself as a *polis Hellenis*.¹¹ Another out-of-the-way region was the lake district of Beyşehir and Suğla Göl between Pisidia, which adopted Hellenistic culture from the bottom up after Alexander's conquests (Mitchell, 1991, 1992), and Lycaonia, which remained hardly Hellenized at all before the Roman empire.¹² South of Beyşehir lake the rolling hill country, with long well-drained slopes exposed to sun on the east and south, is ideal for vines, and monuments from the town of Beyşehir

itself, ancient Misteia, and Amblada are lavishly decorated with vines and grape clusters. Strabo noted that Amblada's wines were exported, and prized for their remedial qualities (Str. 12.7.2). The evidence of the reliefs shows that the wine was not a niche product but the central feature of local culture. One of the subdivisions of Amblada's tribes was called Ambrosia, the nymph who attended the birth of Dionysus (Robert & Robert, 1969). We may be sure that the spread of viticulture across Hellenistic Asia Minor, penetrating to favorable recesses of the interior and the east, was part of the dynamic of Hellenism. By the time of the Roman Empire it was reflected in the wide distribution of Dionysus cults across the interior as well as in the coastlands (Cole, 1991).

The olive is still more distinctive as a trace element of Greek influence, inextricably linked to the creation of Greek *polis* communities, and the need for olive oil in city gymnasia. As new cities were created, often far from the Mediterranean, olive plantations accompanied them. Again, the point is best made by observing olive cultivation when it appears in the marginal areas of Greek culture. In 188 BC, when the Romans drew up a new political settlement for Asia Minor by the Treaty of Apamea, excluding the Seleucids from the region north of the Taurus and greatly increasing the power and reach of the Attalids of Pergamum, a petition was addressed to the Attalid king Eumenes II, as the negotiations at Apamea were in session, by the Seleucid military settlement (*katoikia*) at Tyriaion, on the border of Phrygia and Lycaonia, situated on the main military and trade route to the east. The inhabitants wished to become a city, a *polis*, under Attalid overlordship. The grant was requested – indeed Eumenes offered the petitioners help in drawing up their constitution – and becoming a city also involved creating a gymnasium (Jonnes & Riel, 1997; subsequently SEG XLVII (1997) 1745. English translation in Austin, 2006, 412–4, no 236). In a supplementary letter Eumenes addressed the question of oil supply for the gymnasium. Tyriaion, close to 1000 m above sea level, lay distant from the usual oil-producing areas. The provisional solution was that income from market dues and taxes instead of going to the royal treasury could be used to buy oil, until the “hemiolios,” the senior Attalid financial official, identified another source for the oil, perhaps a specific plantation, on which the normal royal 10% tax could be levied.¹³ The implication is surely that a temporary solution was necessary until oil from a local plantation became available for this purpose. The decision recognized that olive trees take several years to reach productive maturity, but presupposes that this would eventually be possible. Olive production in modern times in Turkey has been restricted to coastal and lower-lying regions in the western river valleys, but archaeological, and especially palaeobotanical pollen studies, confirm the evidence of Strabo and other authors, that olive culture occurred across the interior of Anatolia in Hellenized environments, quite simply because it was indispensable for a Hellenized lifestyle (see, in detail, Mitchell, 2005; also Thonemann, 2011,

53–6). Strabo drew attention to extensive olive plantations alongside the vines at Melitene (12.2.1) and also in the upland Phrygian city of Synnada (12.8.14). We can be sure that a similar attempt, at least, to grow olives would have followed the new city foundation at Tyriaeum. In the first instance olive oil was used as a cleaning agent in the gymnasia, but from the first the fruit and the oil were available for consumption, thus bringing this classic element of Mediterranean diet to inner Anatolia.

Luxury, and adventurous eating habits, were not an indispensable part of Greek city culture, and the diet of ordinary communities in Hellenistic Anatolia is likely to have been conservative: bread, wine, olives, sacrificial meat, and, of course, fish whenever this was available. The Black Sea and the Propontis provided fish for Asia Minor (and beyond) as the Atlantic has done for Europe since pre-modern times, from the luxurious tunny to the humble *hamsi* or anchovy.¹⁴ There will have been other regional variations, as distinctive local products, the walnuts and hazelnuts that were so abundant in the Pontic regions, and the figs of the Maeander valley and the southwest regions, which were already major export items in the Hellenistic periods, brought diversity to the central diets (see Broughton, 1938, 611–2).

Of course, as we have seen in the case of Persia, there were non-Greek cultural influences at work in Anatolia, which will certainly have had an impact on the culture of food consumption. The Galatians, who invaded Anatolia in 278 BC, introduced an entirely distinctive new form of political and social organization, based on their tribal structure (Mitchell, 2003). Public feasts were a central mechanism for their tribal leaders to display their personal power and charisma, and the resources which their success, usually in warfare, had brought them. Four passages of Athenaeus, drawn from the ethnography of Posidonius, describe these huge and often violent feasts, as they could be observed in the Celtic West (Ath. 151e–152d, 152d–f, 154a–c, 246c–d). They are matched by two citations from the third-century BC Athenian historian Phylarchus, who appears to describe similar feasting in Thrace or in Galatia. The staple was simple: crude hunks of bread piled up on tables, and meat, boiled presumably, which was scooped from cauldrons by the banqueters, while waiting for the king to start before broaching the food for themselves (Ath. 150d). An extraordinarily wealthy Galatian called Ariaramnes, erected marquees made of willow poles and branches throughout the country each capable of accommodating 400 men or more (there is no mention of women), who streamed in from the villages and towns to consume all manner of boiled meat from cauldrons, wine, and mashed barley meal (Ath. 150e–f).

Bread baking on a large scale was impracticable at these *al fresco* gatherings, and the mention of barley-meal mash is reminiscent of a vivid anecdote told by Galen, of how he and two friends had been offered food in a Mysian village, where a woman offered them a porridge made from wheat, salt, and

boiled water, a concoction that they could barely digest (Galen *De alim. fac.* 1.6.2–4; *CMG* 5.4.2, 227). Such concoctions were a staple of country cooking, a porridge made of one of the spelt wheats, barley, oats, or chick peas, seasoned with pigs lard, olive oil, honeyed wine, or even salt water.¹⁵ A gruel of boiled milk and cereals appears as one of the humbler components of meals provided by benefactors in the sanctuaries of western Asia Minor.¹⁶ In Galatian banquets, no doubt, meat was the thing, and Galatians, like their Phrygian countrymen in central Anatolia, were great sheep and cattle breeders. A verse epitaph of the fourth century from the Lycaonian steppe between Ancyra and Iconium describes the dead man as having been “rich in sheep, rich in cattle” (MAMA VII, xxiii); Amyntas the last Galatian king owned 300 flocks in this region (Str. 12.6.1). Galatian tribal feasting is a feature of the imperial cult inscription cut on the anta wall of the temple of Augustus and Rome at Ankara, which makes repeated mentions of *demothoiniai*, paid for by the annual priests, the leaders of the Galatian community in Augustus’ later years (Mitchell & French, 2012, no 2). The Galatian reputation for being great trenchermen was still alive in the seventh century AD, as an anecdote from the life of Theodore of Sykeon illustrates (*Vita S. Theodori* 64).

What then did the Romans do for eating and drinking, food production and consumption, in Asia Minor? The question cannot be answered as concretely as in the suggestions made for Persian and Greek influence. Romans had no cultural mission to transform the landscape with new crops, or with products, unknown to the east, which they could not do without. On the contrary, the pattern was to take rather than to give. Fruit from wealthy Asia was highly prized. The figs of Caunus, which offered an unheeded warning to Crassus before his Parthian débâcle in 53 BC (Cic. *Div.* 2.84; Plin. *Nat.* 15.83); peaches from Asia, an expensive delicacy costing a denarius a piece in Caligula’s Rome (Plin. *Nat.* 15.39–40). Importing luxurious foods to Rome was always big business. Indeed, famously, the moralists who claimed that eastern decadence first began to undermine Roman virtue after the Asian campaign of the consul Cn. Manlius Vulso in 189–8 BC fixed precisely on food as the heart of the problem. His triumph had brought the ultimate decadence to Rome, oriental cookery (Liv. 39.6.7–8). Not surprisingly, new or superior varieties of fruit were introduced for cultivation in Italy: plums from Armenia (Plin. *Nat.* 15.41) and most notably the sweet cherry, brought from Pontus by Lucullus (Plin. *Nat.* 15.102). Lucullus was himself a byword for culinary luxury and excess, and Giresun, ancient Cerasus, on the eastern Black Sea coast is still the most famous cherry-producing town in Turkey, and gave the fruit the name by which it is known in most modern languages (*cerises*, cherries, *kirsche*, etc.).

What did follow from Roman rule was an intensified exploitation of Asia Minor’s natural resources, not always to the region’s advantage. The empire,

especially its armies, had huge needs for food products. The ability to satisfy these needs by creating a comprehensive transport infrastructure, and the introduction of administrative systems to make use of this, were fundamental to the longevity of the empire (Kolb, 2000). The building of paved roads, which could be used by carts as well as men and loaded animals at all seasons, opened up the country to travel and exploitation. Already by the reign of Tiberius the so-called *via Sebaste*, which linked highland central Anatolia around Pisidian Antioch and Iconium with the southern coastal harbors of Perge, Aspendos, and Side, was being used by grain traders, shifting their goods from the interior to the coast, and illegally requisitioning free transport facilities from the villagers on their route (Mitchell, 1976; see lines 21–2 of the inscription). Long-distance land transport of staples was now becoming a serious possibility even for private individuals. The Roman state, moreover, had a device that made this sustainable on a large scale throughout the region, the relay system. Local communities, as part of their tax dues, were obliged, rewarded by modest payment, to provide draft animals for transporting soldiers, officials, and goods that the state required. This principle lies behind the development of chains of *mansiones* and *mutationes* along the paved roads, where new mounts and draft animals were provided, and which acted as collection points for regional products, above all grain, which needed to be shifted to where the empire needed it. This system became known as the *annona militaris* from the Severan period, the system of grain provision for Rome's armies (Van Berchem, 1937). In Asia Minor much of the grain, livestock, and derivative products such as leather for shoes and wool for clothing came from huge imperial estates, which began to take shape in the second century AD, run by imperial procurators (Mitchell, 1993, vol. 1, 149–62). Thus the food and other resources of the interior of the country flowed from peasant producers, never wealthy enough to form effective urban elites or create significant cities, to sustain the state apparatus.

Similar evidence of intensification and exploitation can be seen in coastal regions. The harbors of cities such as Aspendos on the south coast were enlarged to accommodate large freighters, probably mostly trading in grain at first, but increasingly carrying oil during the later empire.¹⁷ In Lycia huge granaries were built in the Hadrianic period at Andriake, the port of Myra, and Patara, the province's administrative center. These must have been designed both to store cereals and other products from the interior of Lycia, which could then be shipped on to Rome, and to function as an intermediate storage point for grain shipped from Alexandria. The Lycian ports were important stations on the sea route to Rome.¹⁸ It may have been convenient to unload cargoes at this point before the ships faced the *meltem*, the north winds that impeded north- and west-bound sea traffic in the Aegean for much of the year. Later, when Constantinople became the main destination for Egyptian grain exports, the island of Tenedos opposite Troy played a similar role. Large freighters would unload their cargo there rather than face the strong currents

and contrary winds of the Dardanelles, which could potentially delay them for months. Flotillas of smaller ships were a more efficient and cost-effective mode of transport on the final leg to Constantinople (Mitchell, 2007, 317–8, discussing Procopius *Buildings* 5.1.7–16).

Behind these measures lay a steady, often brutal rationalization of systems of imperial control, which enveloped Asia Minor even more comprehensively in the late than in the early empire. The state's interest in food was feeding its priority dependents, the populations of the capital cities, first Rome and later Constantinople, and the provisioning of its armies.¹⁹ Out of the early imperial annona system, primarily delivering grain from Sicily, North Africa, and Egypt to feed Rome's grotesquely swollen population (Rickman, 1980), the later emperors developed more comprehensive state provision for Constantinople, ensuring the supply not only of grain, but of oil, dried legumes, wine, salt pork, and other meat (Jones 1964, 695–705). These requirements caused a huge shift in the agricultural pattern of southern Asia Minor, as the southern slopes of the Taurus, from Lycia to the borders of Syria, became devoted to large-scale olive production (Mitchell, 2005). Northwest Anatolia, the old province of Bithynia, must have seen a similar transformation, as it served almost as a garden suburb of Constantinople (Mango & Dagron, 1995), just as Thrace to the west became the capital's most important local bread-basket.

How did these changes affect the food culture at the level of the Greek cities of Asia Minor? For one thing there appears to be a shift in patterns and forms of benefaction on the part of the local élites. In the Hellenistic period it was commonplace to sponsor feasting and drinking, especially in the context of local festivals.²⁰ This involved not only furnishing food and wine, but also building dining chambers that are especially to be found in extramural sanctuaries such as those at Labraunda in Caria or at the temple of Men Askaenos outside Pisidian Antioch (Mitchell & Waelkens, 1998, 65–6). The new sanctuaries and temples built under the empire rarely have dining rooms attached. The picture was different under the empire. Elite generosity was redirected from sponsoring feasts to funding major building projects, and later to underwriting the costs of expensive shows and *agones*. In his recent study of civic euergetism Arjan Zuiderhoek notes that benefactions in the form of contributions to urban food supplies in Asia Minor, to make grain available or affordable in times of famine or acute shortage, only amount to 3% of some 530 benefactions attested by inscriptions (Zuiderhoek, 2008, 2009). It is clear that this form of food subsidy was largely functional and pragmatic in its aims, aiming both to avert the possibility of severe shortage and to lessen the possibility of civil unrest during such crises.

As the scale and nature of euergetism changed, food became a less important cultural commodity. A modern analogy may be helpful here. Food, as a cultural marker, plays a more important part in European than North

American society. The endlessly varied micro-environments of Europe, each attached to strong historical and local traditions, have encouraged an extremely variegated and diverse food culture, which still persists and is readily discernible in the face of the contemporary forces of globalization. In the United States, which has forged a common identity for its giant patchwork of immigrant groups, stretching across an entire continent, local food variations are of course apparent, reflecting the availability of particular resources in particular regions, but for the most part food does not function as a major identity marker. As in the modern United States, food in the Roman Empire was an all-important commodity, and its production and consumption was of great economic significance. It did not, however, serve as a major indicator of cultural trends and developments. Food culture in most societies is a local phenomenon, a manifestation of localism. The cosmopolitan universalizing nature of the Roman Empire did not encourage the creation of strong local cultural markers, and food accordingly was less significant in cultural terms than it had been in the classical or Hellenistic periods.

Nevertheless, food was as essential to life, and as essential a source of pleasure, for inhabitants of the Roman Empire as it had been for those of Hellenistic kingdoms or Greek cities in Asia Minor. A reminder of this inevitable fact comes from a unique group of inscriptions, namely more than 400 simple epitaphs from the harbor city of Corycus, in Cilicia in southeast Asia Minor, which indicate not only the names but the professions of the dead persons (Keil & Wilhelm, 1931, 118–213, with the index of professions at 235–6). Almost exactly 25% of the professions are connected to the production or selling of food, perfumes, and drugs. They include nine market gardeners (*kepouroi*), 16 wine merchants, and four sellers of olive oil.²¹ Some shopkeepers simply traded natural products, including a fruit seller, a vegetable seller, a pistachio nut seller, and four butchers.²² The numbers of traders in these categories is quite small, no doubt because many households grew their own garden produce. On the other hand, there were more shops for foods that needed specialist preparation, including 12 bakers,²³ four makers of cakes and sweetmeats (*patissiers*),²⁴ four confectioners,²⁵ and two sausage sellers.²⁶ Interestingly, although fishing is mentioned as a profession, no fishmongers appear in this list. In addition there were evidently numerous traders who sold food and drink in bars and other establishments, including 19 bar owners (*kapeloi*), one tavern owner (*tabernarios*), seven innkeepers (*pandokoi*), and two sellers of hot food and condiments (*thermopoles*, *pantopoles*). Seven persons ran perfume or drug stores.²⁷

The large number of Korykan epitaphs, all dating between the fourth and seventh centuries, most of them probably between AD 400 and 550, makes it likely that almost all of the professions actually to be found in the city are here represented, and also that the numerical proportions have some statistical validity.²⁸ The range of foods available was not wide. The three

Mediterranean staples, bread, wine, and olives, occupy pride of place, although it is likely that much of the wine and olive oil produced or handled locally was in fact destined for consumption elsewhere, and especially at Constantinople, and that most olive oil will have been used for external application, not internal consumption. Bread was not baked at home, but bought from shops, and the number of bakers is predictably high. Pastries and sweetmeats must have been popular, and stand out as the only “luxury” items. Moreover, many people ate, and especially drank, out. The Korykan epitaphs allow us to glimpse a way of life and the food habits of a busy mercantile port of the later Roman Empire, but they do not form the basis for an appreciation of its culture.

FURTHER READING

There have been no special studies of food in Asia Minor in antiquity, but much of the academic literature, above all the work of Louis Robert, the greatest scholar of Asia Minor in antiquity, draws attention to the abundant diversity of products and natural resources of the region, which underpinned food production and consumption against a backdrop of changing political and social cultures. The most comprehensive English-language survey of Asia Minor’s resources is still that by Broughton (1938). Fish from the Black Sea and the Propontis are the subject of Bekker-Nielsen (2005a), Demir (2007), and Robert (1950). For olive oil see the work of Mitchell (2005), and for civic grain supplies see Zuiderhoek (2008, 2009). Galen’s detailed observations of the differing diets of town and country dwellers around Pergamum in the second century AD are of fundamental importance; see the translation by Powell (2003) and brief discussion by Mitchell (1993, I, 165–70).

NOTES

- 1 For the overwhelming importance of grain in all ancient diet, see Foxhall & Forbes (1982).
- 2 See the calculations for modern Izmit (ancient Nicomedia) made by Guney (2012).
- 3 OGIS 383 line 57; the fullest modern edition and study of these inscriptions is that by Waldmann (1973).
- 4 The work of Facella (2005) is an excellent survey, but makes too little of the negative impact of Rome on this successful small kingdom.
- 5 The best short survey of the geographical background to Asia Minor history is still Broughton’s account of the land (1938, 599–695).

- 6 For the Maeander, the work of Thonemann (2011) is not only indispensable, but also a virtuosic demonstration of how to write social and cultural history based on a geographical analysis.
- 7 See the Persepolis fortification tablets, discussed by Briant (1996, 434–87).
- 8 There was less emphasis on cereal production. Tralles, and also Ephesus, received imperial permission to import Egyptian grain under Hadrian (cf. Poljankov, 1989, nos. 77, 80, 145; Wörle, 1971).
- 9 Meiggs & Lewis, 1969, no 12; for Persian peaches see Pliny *Nat.* 15.44.
- 10 Robert, 1963, 433–540. It is likely that, before Hellenization, Melitene had benefited from Persian tree planting.
- 11 Strabo 12.2.1. Note that excellent wine today comes from Elazığ, east of the Euphrates beyond Melitene.
- 12 Paul and Barnabas, entering Lycaonian Lystra in the mid first century AD, were addressed *lykaonisti* ‘in Lycaonian’ (*Acts* 14.11).
- 13 For the interpretation of the text, which is difficult at this point, see Müller (2005, 356–8).
- 14 There is an immense literature. As a starting point, see Bekker-Nielsen (2005a). For tunny fishing at Parium in the Propontis, see Robert (1950); for Black Sea anchovies, exported also to Athens, see Demir (2007).
- 15 Mentioned on several occasions by Galen in *De alimentorum facultatibus*; cf. Mitchell (1993, vol. 1, 168–9) for references.
- 16 At Cyme, Priene, and Mylasa; see Robert & Robert (1983, 134) for references and other parallels.
- 17 For the wealthy grain dealers of Aspendos, who hoarded their grain in order to secure higher prices, while the ordinary inhabitants of the city ate bitter vetch, see Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 1.15.2–3.
- 18 Lycian granaries: see Brandt & Kolb (2005).
- 19 Compare G.E. de Ste Croix’s famous characterisation of the Roman Empire as a vampire bat, sucking the blood from the productive lower classes of society (de Ste Croix, 1980, 503).
- 20 A good example is provided by the pattern of subsidized feasting to be seen at the sanctuaries of Carian Stratonicea in the Hellenistic period.
- 21 For the significance of olive oil merchants at Korykos, see Mitchell (2005).
- 22 *Oporopoles, lachanopoles, pi(t)akarios, makellarios, kreopoles.*

- 23 The terms used are *manceps* (five), *artokopos* (five), and *silignarius* (two). The last were likely to have specialized in fine white bread.
- 24 The terms are *itrarioi* (three), and *plakountarioi* (one). The latter must have specialized in braided baked goods, reminiscent of the Cappadocian specialty mentioned by Athenaeus 647c; see p. 286.
- 25 *Pastillarioi*, *basumniates*. The latter made cakes from boiled wheat, honey, figs, and chestnuts; cf. Athenaeus 645b.
- 26 *Isikiarioi*.
- 27 Five were designated as *myrepsoi*.
- 28 See the best discussion of this material, by Patlagean (1977, 156–68).

CHAPTER 28

Food among Greeks of the Black Sea: the Challenging Diet of Olbia

David Braund

Studies of the Black Sea region in connection with food are usually concerned with one of two themes. The first is the export of foodstuffs from the region into the Mediterranean world, especially to classical Athens, while the second is the diet of the non-Greek peoples of the region. The present discussion is more concerned with the diet of the Greeks of the region, insofar as we have knowledge and can make plausible inferences about that, with all due allowance for variation around the very different coastlands and local economies of the region. However, it is worth beginning with the two aforesaid themes, not simply because they are more familiar but because they raise questions about and shed light upon the matter of Greek diet in the region. It is also worth being clear from the first that this is a qualitative study, for I see no scope for quantitative extrapolations in the region and, indeed, very little elsewhere in antiquity.

In studies of the region's exports the particular focus is usually the shipping of grain (more specifically, wheat) out of the region to Athens. Some scholars persist in seeing such shipments as a vital feature of the Athenian economy, despite the evidence, which tends rather to suggest that they were occasional and spasmodic (e.g. Moreno, 2007, with some nuance). In particular, the much-vaunted figures for East Crimean wheat-yields that Strabo (7.4.5) seems to give us are wholly implausible in view of the quality of the soil there (Vinogradov, 1996, 78–9, with bibliography; cf. Kuznetsov, 2000, 116–7). The whole image of Black Sea exchange with the Mediterranean world requires adjustment and more precision. Recently, for example, students of the material record, especially of the remains of transport amphorae, have noticed the striking absence (with only rare exceptions) of amphorae of Black Sea origin among the pottery assemblages of the Mediterranean world (e.g. Garlan, 2007; Kassab Tezgör & Inaishvili, 2010). While we must reckon with a series of complicating factors, notably the potential for re-use of amphorae, their absence tends to suggest that goods exported from the Black Sea were rarely carried in amphorae. Indeed, it is easy to understand why the olive oil and wine exported by Sinope, for example, may not have been taken into the Aegean in great quantities, for all its local significance around the Black Sea. In the Mediterranean world there was an abundance of wine and olive oil much closer at hand, in quantity, quality, and variety, so that there was little sense in shipping such goods from the Black Sea. The same may be said for

the wine of Heraclea Pontica, which circulated widely around the region, or even of the wine of Colchis, which might be shipped as far as the Crimea, and the unidentified wines of other Pontic communities. These were part of regional trade, but seem seldom to have been brought into the Mediterranean economy, where there was no obvious market for them and no great profit to be made to offset the costs of their transport.

In fact, as research on these topics proceeds, it tends to confirm the only account of the exchange of goods between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean world that we have from antiquity. This is the brief summary given by Polybius. He gives this summary to illustrate his broader contention that the Byzantines have done well by their fellow Greeks in facilitating the exchange. And while his remarks have a particular bearing on his report of the conflict between Byzantium and Rhodes in the later third century, he is evidently generalizing about Byzantine service to Greeks in this respect over a long and unspecified period down to the particular outbreak of hostilities between the two parties in 220. Accordingly, despite scholars' regular tendency to misapprehend the fact (even Shcheglov, 1990, 156), what Polybius claims to offer is not a snapshot of exchange around 220, but an account of exchange over an extended period, which makes it all the more important:

As for the necessities of life, namely hides and the mob of bodies taken into slavery, the Black Sea region provides us with the best and most useful. As for superfluities, they furnish us with honey, wax and salt-fish in abundance. And, as for the goods in surplus in our region, they receive olive-oil and every kind of wine. They exchange grain in both directions: providing it in a good year, at other times importing it

(Plb. 4.38).

Immediately we see that Polybius confirms the suggestions of amphora-studies insofar as the great staples of oil and wine are, for him, goods traded into the Black Sea, not out of it. The export from the region of hides and slaves required no amphorae, of course. However, the shipping of honey, wax, and salted fish might well entail the use of such vessels. And while we might consider honey and wax from the region to be rather special commodities, Polybius specifies that the salted fish was exported "in abundance." Moreover, there are other goods to be reckoned with, about which Polybius chooses not to make mention in his short remarks, such as the famous nuts of Paphlagonia, "ornaments of the feast," or the well-known ruddle pigment shipped out of Sinope, or the pitch that was plentiful in the region and may be exemplified by the pitch found among the cargo of the wreck at Tektas Burnu near Erythrae (Carlson, 2003). Therefore, the absence of Black Sea amphorae from the archaeological record of the Mediterranean remains problematic. The best preliminary conclusion seems to be that the lack of wine and oil exports from

the region has massively diminished the proportion of Black Sea amphorae in the material record, while re-use of amphorae might be especially important where goods were produced and put into containers in less bulk, as with honey, wax, and even salted fish.

The upshot of all this for our present concern with the Greek diet of the region is not insignificant. Of course any correlation between export and local consumption is uncertain (cf. Garnsey, 1988, 51), but even so we must observe Polybius' Greek perspective that the Black Sea region was rich in fish. After all, the point is frequently made by other writers too, not least Herodotus, as we shall see. While the Black Sea itself was famous for its fish, the many great rivers of the region also provided a remarkable source of fish. Meanwhile, Polybius reminds us also of the famous honey of the region. The honey of the Scythians had a high reputation among the Greeks of the Mediterranean. That may help to account for the rash indulgence by Xenophon's 10 000 in the intoxicating "mad honey" that they found near Trapezus on the southeastern shore, far from Scythia to the north and west across the region (Xen. *An.* 4.8. 20–1). In short, Polybius has highlighted for us two foodstuffs – fish (in all its variety) and honey – that we might expect to find as especially important in the diet of Greeks of the Black Sea. To these we may add imported olive oil, in addition to the olive oil produced in the Black Sea itself (not least on the west coast: Xen. *An.* 7.1.37; further, later). Also wines. Much has been written about non-Greek demand for wine, in the Black Sea and elsewhere, but we must bear in mind also the demand for wine among the Greeks of the region, whose needs were of more concern to Polybius, no doubt. As for wheat, Polybius also reminds us that, for all its reputation as a source of grain, the Greek cities of the Black Sea could suffer bad harvests, in addition to the possible upheavals of local conflicts with non-Greeks or with other Greek cities. Enough instances are known through the chance survival of evidence, but perhaps the strongest indication of the general phenomenon is provided by Strabo, writing under Augustus and Tiberius but surveying the course of Greek history over many centuries before. For, in describing the well-watered plain east of Amisus, Strabo exceptionally remarks that this is an area which knows no failure of the harvest. Even in the Black Sea region, this plain of the southern coast was very unusual in its happy situation (Str. 12.3.15).

With that broad sense of export in mind, we may turn to the large issue of Greek concern with the diets of non-Greek populations around the region. These are important for the present enquiry particularly because the distinction between Greek and non-Greek is a very uncertain one. For when Greeks of the Mediterranean world considered Greeks of the Black Sea they often saw something that was somehow not entirely or properly Greek. It was all too easy for Greeks of the old cultural centers, most obviously Athens, to consider Greeks of the Black Sea as inadequate in their Greek language and at

least idiosyncratic in their ways. At best the region was perceived as a cultural backwater, and at worst a place where Greekness had been so infected by neighboring barbarians as to hardly be Greek at all (Braund, 1997). The most sustained, and not wholly unsympathetic, judgment of that kind is to be found in the 36th oration of Dio Chrysostom, written around AD 100 and apparently delivered to an audience in the Bithynian city of Prusa, itself hardly a beacon of Hellenic tradition. Dio describes the city of Olbia (alias Borysthenes), which he claims to have visited, a description designed particularly in order to ground a homily on the need for civic cohesion. Dio's Olbia is a sad microcosm, wherein the city is under permanent threat from local hostiles and has barely recovered from depredation of the past, a remnant of its previous self. Its culture is dominated by a fierce attachment to Homer, especially as the poet of its divinity Achilles. Its manners and style are quaintly old fashioned, so that the effects of its Milesian origins can still be perceived. However, in fighting local barbarians, the Olbiopolitans have adopted some of their habits, especially visible in their military dress. In short, this is a form of Greekness, but the city suffers from its isolation from the rest of Greek culture and shows the impact of those with whom it must engage, the neighboring non-Greeks. Clearly, Dio's account is an overstatement of the city's situation, but it serves to illustrate the large issue of cultural osmosis that is so important to all the Greek cities around the region. For, on the one hand, these communities were confident in asserting their Greekness and in tracing, for example, their origins to Miletus and other cities of the Aegean world, not to mention the involvement of Greek gods, nymphs, and the rest. But on the other, there can be no real doubt that non-Greeks played large parts in their creation and subsequent histories, not simply as enemies, but also as allies, wives, trading-partners, and more besides. While Herodotus tells the story of King Scyles, a Scythian who wished also to be a Greek in Olbia, as an exceptional occurrence, he also makes clear that there was nothing remarkable about such a king spending time in the city or his army sitting for weeks at its gates, while Scythians and Greeks are shown as in familiar contact with each other in and around the city (Braund, 2008). Close by the city Herodotus also shows us a people, the Callippidae, who are for him "Greek Scythians," though arguments persist about their more precise location (e.g. Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 71). Inside the city it suffices to observe the array of local names sported among the Greek elite, while others of their fellows had Greek names that would not be out of place in Athens. When Greeks remark negatively upon local influence on the Greekness of Greeks of the region, their overwhelming concern is language. However, given the reality of that influence in the form of cultural osmosis from the archaic period onwards, a process of polyvalent influences across centuries, we may reasonably wonder how far diet was also affected. Certainly, we can observe Greeks outside the region taking a keen interest in Scythian wisdom about the body in general and diet in particular. As staunch a champion of Greek values as Plutarch

seems to support the notion that Greeks have something to learn about such matters from a wise Scythian. At least he shows Scythian Anacharsis sharing his knowledge about diet and purging with Greeks without any hint of criticism (Durling, 1995; Carlson, 2003). How far were the Greeks of Olbia, for example, influenced in their dietary habits by their multiple links and associations with Scythians?

In Greece proper, the Spartans of the fifth century are said by Herodotus to have supported the proposition that King Cleomenes I had adopted his drinking practices from Scythians, specifically from Scythian envoys with whom he had spent much time at Sparta (Hdt. 6.84). That, they said, was why Cleomenes formed the habit of drinking unmixed wine. They even claimed that this was the origin of an expression in general use at Sparta, where, when they want a stronger drink, they say “Make it Scythian!” (*episkuthison*). Cleomenes in his madness might be dismissed as exceptional, but it is especially interesting to find in this account that the Spartans might trace an aspect of their drinking-culture to Scythian influence. For if Scythian influence (however imaginary) might be observed at Sparta and claimed even by Spartans themselves, does that not encourage us to wonder about Scythian influence in drinking and dining at Olbia nearby? Or about the stories of Scythian influence told at Olbia, where, for example, the establishment of the cult of Cybele in Hylaea was traced to a vow made in Cyzicus by Scythian Anacharsis and his subsequent death at the cult-site (Hdt. 4.76). In fact, Greek notions about Scythian drinking-culture were not confined to Sparta. Broadly contemporary with Cleomenes was a poem of Anacreon of Teos (the mother city of Pontic Phanagoria) wherein the Greek drinkers already share a conception of “Scythian drinking.” That evidently entails not only the consumption of strong (though, as at Sparta, not necessarily unmixed) wine, but also much martial noise, with yelling and the clashing of arms or other available objects (*PMG* fr. 356a–b). Greeks such as Anacreon imagined that Scythian drinking habits were at odds with the smoother style of the symposium that became normative among Ionians in particular. The point is not that Scythians became drunk, but that they treated wine in ways different from the Ionian-style symposium and perhaps indeed in a fashion that was more akin to the drinking-style of Spartans, rather as Herodotus’ report of Spartan attitudes tends to suggest (cf. Hdt. 4.77). In fact, while we can find Scythians drinking in ways unfamiliar to most Greeks, the drunken Scythian is as absent from extant ancient texts as he is familiar in the assumptions of many a modern scholar.

For, as Herodotus makes clear (esp. Hdt. 4.66), the consumption of wine was a controlled social event among Scythians. Their everyday drink was fermented horse milk, while there is some reason to think that they might also turn honey into mead and millet into beer (notably, Glaucus *FGrH* 806.1; cf. Virg. *G.* 3.379–80; Dugan, 2009). The fact that Herodotus opens his account

of Scythians with a description of its production tends to confirm the importance of horse milk and its consumption to Greek ideas about Scythians as well as its importance in Scythian culture itself. From Homer and Hesiod onwards, the peoples of the northern steppe are quintessentially horse-milkers and milk-drinkers (Carlson, 2003). That central feature of their diet constituted a marked difference between themselves and Greeks, as did their nomadic lifestyle in general. To that extent, the consumption of horse milk may be said to be part of the notion of the Scythian as Other in Greek culture (Hartog, 1988). However, the point is easily overstated. For Greeks too might consume fermented horse milk. The Hippocratic writer of *On natural affections* recommends the daily consumption of a large quantity of fermented horse milk (“agitated horse milk”: *De affect. inter.* 3) for those afflicted by tubercular complaints. That provides an important context for the otherwise rather odd attempt in another Hippocratic work to explain the behavior of fluids in the human body by comparing it with the behavior of horse milk as processed by Scythians (an account notably different in detail from that of Herodotus: *Hp. Diseases* 4.51). We seem to have here indications that the Greek appreciation of Scythian dietary wisdom visible in Plutarch had its roots in much earlier Hippocratic lore and very possible in the experience of Greeks involved in the Black Sea region, whether as settlers, traders, or otherwise. The consumption of fermented horse milk divided Scythian and Greek not because it was totally alien and distasteful to Greeks (as might be the consumption of human kin: cf. *Hdt.* 3.38), but because, while it was a daily norm for Scythians, Greeks tended to consume it at special times, particularly for medicinal purposes. Again, however, we may wonder what Greeks at Olbia thought about the consumption of fermented horse milk, and whether their attitudes to it were significantly different (whether for or against) from the attitudes of Greeks in general.

As for the grain produced around the Black Sea, for all the modern concern with wheat there, we must reckon also with barley and especially millet. We know from literary evidence that millet was the staple grain on the east coast of the Black Sea (Braund, 1991; cf. *Xen. An.* 7.5.12 on millet eaters of the west coast, near Salmydessus). Traditionally, it was made into a starchy mass comparable to porridge (cf. the emmer-based *tarhana* of Pontic Turkey: Hill & Bryer, 1995), akin also to a thick and rubbery mashed potato. It remains a popular dish in modern Georgia, where it is known as *ghomi*, but millet has now been replaced by maize in modern production. Cheese, herbs, and the like are regularly folded into this “porridge,” which is best consumed while warm. However, it was not only on the east coast that millet was grown: it is well attested archaeologically also on the north coast, in particular, where it was a crop of Greek cities and local populations alike (cf. *Plin. Nat.* 18.100 on its importance to Sarmatians). However, as far as we can judge, the populations of the Greek cities much preferred to eat wheat.

Of course it is not only difficult but also unwise to generalize about the Black Sea as a whole region, for its sheer size and diversity require an appreciation of substantial local difference. Fortunately, some cities in the region have been studied with particular regard to the diet of their inhabitants. Particularly interesting is the case of Olbia, for which we have the studies of M.V. Skrzhinskaya, which bring together the literary tradition with the results of the long-standing and distinguished excavations there (Skrzhinskaya, 2000b, 190–202, 2000a). The site is all the more rewarding because it has not been significantly overbuilt since antiquity, by contrast with so many of the cities of the region. Accordingly, Olbia offers us a valuable case-study, which in turn offers some answers to the broader a priori questions that have already emerged in this chapter.

The Olbian and Other Pontic Diets

Fish were evidently of particular importance in the Olbian diet. Archaeology indicates that the fish consumed there fall into five broad categories, namely sturgeon, pike, carp, perch, and catfish, though we may wonder with Skrzhinskaya whether the apparent lack of small fish in the material record owes something to their poorer survival. It is no surprise to find a series of attendant circumstances, such as the fish-market attested at Olbia in the later third century BC in the famous decree in honor of Protogenes (further, later), the regular discovery of hooks and net-weights and even the suggestion that the father of one of Olbia's more famous sons (the philosopher Bion of Borysthenes) was a servile dealer in salt-fish (Diog. Laert. 4.46, an ironic rebuttal of the suggestion, not an admission). Olbia had a good source of salt at hand, so that the salting of the abundant fish there was facilitated (Hdt. 4.58; D. Chr. *Or.* 36.3). In the chora the remains of fish-smokeries have been found, while the pottery locally produced at Olbia includes simple grey-ware fish-plates. As ever, much scholarly concern with the economy of Olbia is directed at its exports around and out of the Black Sea, but these plates in particular serve to underline the fact that the ready availability of fish meant local consumption too. Estimates of quantity are at best difficult, but bone-remains have been taken to suggest that sturgeon, zander (the pike-perch), and especially catfish were the fish most consumed (further, Munk Højte, 2005, esp. 140 on catfish, after Ivanova, 1994). There were many species of sturgeon, for whom the rivers Bug and Dnieper were well suited for migration to spawning grounds upriver (Gavrilyuk, 2005, esp. 106–7). These are large fish, as also the mighty catfish of the region whose weight may attain as much as 300 kg, up to some 5 m in length, a monster by any standards (Gavrilyuk, 2005, 107). Tunny seem to have not been at all important at Olbia, whose location explains a preference for river and estuary fish, while at Panticapaeum they seem to have been eaten only occasionally (Gaidukevich, 1971, 125), for these were taken from the sea especially on the southern shore

of the Black Sea (Munk Højte, 2005). However, sturgeons seem to have been at least as popular as at Olbia on both shores of the Crimean Bosphorus, at Panticapaeum and Phanagoria alike (Vinogradov, 1996, 79; cf. their role in the coinage of Kerkinitis too: Stolba, 2005, 119). Shellfish were widely popular, notably oysters and mussels (see, e.g., Vinogradov, 1996, 79). By comparison with their Mediterranean counterparts, the people of Olbia evidently ate not only a lot of fish, but specifically a lot of river fish. That accords with Olbia's position on the banks of the Hypanis (the modern river Bug) and so on the estuary which that great river shares with the still mightier and fish-rich Borysthenes (the Dnieper). The Black Sea in general was rich in sea fish, and famous for many of its species across Greek culture, but it was the plethora of great rivers and great fish that really caught the eye of Greek visitors such as Herodotus. At Olbia and at many other cities around the region (Istros on the Danube (Istros), Tyras on the river Tyras, Tanais on the river Tanais and so on) there was river fish to be had on a scale and quality that most Greeks of the Mediterranean could scarcely imagine. At the same time, the fact that these cities often shared the names of the rivers on which they sat tends to highlight the vital importance of the river in the life of the city, not least in its food. Meanwhile, we should be clear that fish was not a foodstuff that set Greeks apart from Scythians, as was once imagined: we now know that fish was commonly consumed by the nomads of the steppe, and possibly even traded by them to Greeks (further, Gavrilyuk, 2005).

The meat consumed at Olbia seems at first sight to be unremarkable, for the bones of sheep, goats and cattle bulk large, augmented by a little game and fowl. Sheep and goats were the principal sources of meat, while cattle seem to have increased as a proportion of the livestock by the end of the fifth century. Hunting seems to have contributed only a little to the meat consumed (Zhuravlyov, 1983; cf. Vinogradov, 1996, 87–8; Solovyov, 1999, 53). But where is the pork? Pigs are poorly represented in the bone assemblages of Olbia. They are by no means wholly absent, but it is clear enough that on the lower Bug pigs were not kept in any quantity (cf. the rather higher figures of Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 75, indicating variation between places). There seem to have been more in the Bosporan region, for example (Tsalkin, 1960, 97, Figure 40). Their apparently limited numbers are potentially of particular interest. For Herodotus tells us that Scythians did not keep pigs (Hdt. 4.61), while Gavrilyuk's invaluable overviews of bone-finds from Scythia confirm beyond doubt that he was right (Gavrilyuk, 1987, 23; cf. 1995, 1999). On the steppe, pigs were impractical for the nomad: they are prone to going their own way and to willful violence. In the apparently scarce pigs of Olbia, therefore, we may have support for the proposition that the nature of the Olbian diet owed something to Scythian culture, for there is no apparent reason in terms of environment or climate why Olbia should not have made full use of pigs in its diet. Moreover, it remains unclear why Olbia would not have developed its pig herds over time, especially if we are convinced by arguments from bone-

studies that cattle and sheep were brought in from overseas to breed with local livestock (Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 74–5). At the same time, Skrzhinskaya proceeds from her observation of horse bones in the archaeology of Olbia to wonder whether horse meat was enthusiastically consumed in the city as it was among the Scythians of the steppe (Skrzhinskaya, 2000a). Meanwhile, cut-marks on bones have also led Zhuravlyov to wonder whether dog meat was also part of the Olbian diet, presumably for the poor and desperate (Zhuravlyov, 1983). There is much work to be done on these issues. Provisionally, we may suspect that the relative absence of pork and perhaps the substantial presence of horse meat in the Olbian diet once more set the diet of the city apart from the norms of Greeks in the Mediterranean and indeed elsewhere in the Black Sea region.

Further, we should consider too that the possible consequences of scarcity of pigs and pig meat at Olbia, beyond limitations on sausage-making. In principle, this was more than an issue of diet. For pigs were animals of choice for certain sacrifices in Greek culture. In particular, any shortage of pigs would have been problematic for the sacrifices required in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, which was clearly of considerable importance in the city (Zinko, 2006; cf. Skrzhinskaya, 2000b, 55 on priests in *IOlb* 68.70 and 71). For, to judge from evidence for such rituals elsewhere, pigs were to be offered to these deities above all other animals. The well-studied sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth shows a strong predominance of pig bones, albeit from a collection of bones that does not claim to be entirely complete (Bookidis *et al.*, 1999). The same may be said of the sanctuary of Demeter at Cyrene (White, 1976, 180), while pigs featured prominently also in the cults of Demeter and Kore at Athens, Cnossus, Cnidus, and elsewhere (see, e.g., Coldstream *et al.*, 1973, 96). Their centrality in these rituals was taken to arise from the role of pigs and their swineherd in the disappearance of Kore (see, e.g., Tzanetou, 2002, with bibliography), so pigs were not easily replaced by other creatures (cf. Schmitt Pantel, 2011, 134). In Olbia, if the pig supply was problematic, pigs could presumably have been imported, for example from Histria and the Danuba estuary (Alexandrescu & Schuller, 1990; cf. Wilkes, 2005, 169). However, any scarcity of pigs would have given a special edge and meaning to their sacrifice and consumption in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore there. It is at least a curiosity in that regard that the short list of sacrificial animals found inscribed at Olbia mentions cattle, sheep, and goats, but apparently not pigs (*IOSPE* i² 76 (fourth century BC (?)), where the absence of pigs has led to much epigraphical speculation).

Wine and olive oil also look rather different from an Olbian perspective. The cultivation of wine was difficult at Olbia, especially for reasons of local environment, though not impossible. By the Roman period, the city seems to have managed to produce a little of its own, as winepresses, pruning-tools, and the like confirm, perhaps from the fourth century BC onwards

(Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 74, with full bibliography). However, before that date and substantially also during the Roman period, Olbia depended on wine that was imported (Skrzhinskaya, 2000b, 192). That provides an intriguing context for Dionysiac rituals attested in the city (see, e.g., Skrzhinskaya, 2000b, 56–8; Braund, 2008). Whereas cities in the Mediterranean world also had use for imports to supplement local production, not least to meet the tastes and social ambitions of their elites, they also had their own vintage. At Olbia, however, all (or almost all) wine consumed in the city had to be brought in from overseas, whether from the Mediterranean or from closer at hand, such as the vineyards of Crimean Chersonesus or the southern coast of the Black Sea. Olbia was rather exceptional in this regard even on the northern Black Sea coast, for in the Bosporan kingdom viticulture and wine-making were already underway in the sixth century (Vinogradov, 1996, 84–5; Vinokurov, 1999). There, as with fruit trees, the vines were given protection, but conditions were tougher at Olbia (Str. 7.3.18; cf. 2.1.16). However, archaeology shows that wine imports in the city included the best vintages, such as Chian, though we should also take seriously the complaint that Dio Chrysostom claimed to have heard there, namely that unscrupulous traders bring the most ghastly wine for sale there (*Or.* 36.25: in their unscrupulousness, not proper Greeks!). The complaint is plausible enough, for in a city without its own wine there was a market for even the most unpalatable plonk, and so an opportunity for the alert merchant. Meanwhile, the city's problems with olive oil were at least as awkward, for, as with most of the Black Sea region, the olive would not grow at Olbia. In consequence, this other staple of the Greek diet, and of Greek culture more generally, had to be imported, whether from the south and southwest coast or from further afield. It seems to follow that olive oil and wine were more expensive and scarcer commodities in Olbia than they were usual in cities of the Mediterranean. Moreover, we are left to wonder whether the people of Olbia (the poorer perhaps, in particular) adopted Scythian practice and sought to exploit animal fats, not least the butter that might be skimmed off horse milk but which was much more readily winnable from the milk of cows and sheep. While Olbiopolitans may well have experimented with vegetable oils (e.g. from hemp, suggests Skrzhinskaya), we may be sure enough that the poorest in Olbian society could not afford imported olive oil (Skrzhinskaya, 2000b, 194). However, in addition to animal fats, the most substantial and available source of oil at Olbia was surely the oils that could be extracted from the abundant fish there. We happen to know that dolphin oil was used in place of olive oil among the Mossynoeci of the southeastern Black Sea, for Xenophon tells us precisely that (*Xen. An.* 5.4.27–9, quoted later). Meanwhile, there abides the question of religious celebration: olive oil apart, in what sense did Olbia celebrate Dionysus, the wine-harvest and so on, when it had no such harvest? At least that aspect of Dionysiac ritual which entailed the god bringing wine from across the sea might have suited the conditions of wine-

importing Olbia very well.

However, the absence of the olive did not of course mean that other productive trees could not be grown. Apples, plums, and pears are grown in numbers in the modern region, while the discovery of pear-rind at Didova Khata I (dated c. 300 BC: Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 72) in the Olbian chora encourages the belief that such fruits were grown there also in antiquity, even if we hesitate (as perhaps we should not) to accept suggestions of the traces of orchards in the archaeology of land-use outside the city (Skrzhinskaya, 2000a). Apples and pears happen to be attested among the produce of the Bosporan kingdom by Theophrastus, together with figs and pomegranates, which may have found the Olbian climate too challenging. For Theophrastus notes that, around Panticapaeum, fig trees (numerous and of a good size) and pomegranates are given protection from the elements, while apples and pears of all kinds crop there in abundance, by contrast with the bay and the myrtle, which they take great efforts to grow, without success (*HP* 4.5.3; cf. Hannestad, 2007, 87, 91; Gaidukevich, 1971, 119). Theophrastus' details about Panticapaeum offer a rare insight into the struggle of cities in the region to produce in a non-Mediterranean environment all that it needed, whether for food, for religious observance (as here), or for whatever other reason. Reliance on imports was undesirable not only because of Greek ideological concern with autarky, but also for reasons of practicality, including surety of supply and cost. However, it was not always possible to meet the needs of a culture rooted in its Mediterranean origins in the significantly wetter and colder environment of the Black Sea region. As well as recourse to imports, the Greeks of the Black Sea had strong cause to adapt to their non-Mediterranean environment, while striving nevertheless to meet all their needs by local production, as Theophrastus shows them doing at Panticapaeum. Subsequently, even the horticultural energies of Mithridates Eupator could not conquer the natural conditions there (Plin. *Nat.* 16.137).

Meanwhile, at Crimean Chersonesus cucumbers, melons, and watermelons formed part of the diet, though it is not entirely clear that they were produced locally. At Olbia the depiction of a life-like melon on a local vessel of the Hellenistic period at least shows us that the melon was not wholly unfamiliar, whether or not it was grown there (Skrzhinskaya, 2000a). As for legumes and the like, peas and lentils are firmly attested in the Olbian chora, while beans are usually supposed there too. Wild forms of onions and garlic are native across the whole northern coast of the Black Sea, but Herodotus specifies their place in the farming activity in the hinterland around and beyond Olbia:

The Alazones and the Callippidae have lifestyles akin to the Scythians; in other respects, but they grow and consume grain (*sitos*), and onions, garlic, lentils (*phakos*) and millets (*kengchros*). And to the north of the Alazones dwell the Farming Scythians, who grow grain (*sitos*) not to eat but to sell

This important, albeit brief, passage sketches for us the outcome of extended osmosis between the self-consciously Greek city and its local neighbors that Herodotus found at Olbia when he visited the city and saw a little of its region at some time in the middle decades of the fifth century BC (Braund, 2007). Of course, much more might have been said, for example about the honey and wax produced among the Alazones (Paus. 1.32), though Herodotus does mention a Thracian story that lands north of the Danube were impassable through the density of bees there, only to reject it on the grounds that the region will have been too cold for bees (5.10). The Alazones and Callippidae were very Scythian in their ways, except that they were not fully nomadic and had an economy and diet wherein the growing of grain figured prominently, by contrast with the animal-based diet of the steppe Scythians. That is no doubt part of the reason why Herodotus calls the Callippidae “Greek Scythians” (4.17), though the term seems to imply links of blood and stories of kinship and ancestry, rather as he gives us elsewhere for the Geloni, a people of the interior whom he considers once to have been Greeks at the coast (4.108–9). Further from the city, the so-called Farming Scythians have often been understood as taking the opportunity of supplying Greek demand, while not consuming the grain they grow. However, over 20 years ago Shcheglov pointed out the problems with this popular notion, and that Herodotus says nothing of sale to Greeks or specifically to Olbia (Shcheglov, 1990). His arguments have not been taken to heart: it is characteristic of modern scholarship that the activities of the interior too have usually been considered in the context of Athenian importation of grain from the Black Sea. But what of local demand, within which we may or may not include the requirements of Olbia itself? And what of the fact that, as Shcheglov stresses, the wheat produced in the interior among the Farming Scythians was not so-called “naked wheat,” whether soft (*Triticum aestivum* or *vulgare*) or hard (*T. durum*: Spurr, 1986, 15), but overwhelmingly *Triticum dicoccum* (cf. Shramko & Yanushevich, 1985, 60; Vinogradov, 1996, 85–6), better known as emmer wheat.

The advantages of emmer wheat are numerous. It is very tolerant of cold, wetness, and drought, and notably more resistant to insects and fungal attack than “naked wheat,” whether in growth or in storage. Its yield is good and its nutritional value is higher than the favored “naked wheat.” However, these advantages are to be set against two particular disadvantages. First, this is a husked wheat, which must be removed from its husk before use by the application of heat. Second, the ancient palate considered it less desirable than naked wheat, whether it was baked as a kind of flat bread or made into a porridge. Accordingly, emmer was the food of the poor, the peasant, and the slave (Spurr, 1986, 11–2). Moreover, as Shcheglov stresses, it is less convenient for transport, since the grain is best kept husked before use, but as such it occupies far more volume than its naked brethren (Shcheglov, 1990, 155). Accordingly, *T. dicoccum* was invaluable for local use north of Olbia

and may have been brought to Olbia too, particularly as food for the poor and for animals, but it was not well suited to shipment to Athens and, once there, would not have been as marketable as *T. aestivum* in any case. When we take those considerations together with the fact that Herodotus, our only authority, says nothing about sale of this grain to Olbia, let alone to Athens, we can only conclude that the grain produced by the Farming Scythians is best kept apart from modern ruminations on the Athenian grain supply. As for the naked wheats, soft wheat suffers from drought much more than hard wheat, while hard wheat suffers much more than soft from the cold (Spurr, 1986, 15). On the north coast of the Black Sea, drought might be an issue, but it was cold in the winter months that really mattered, so that we should expect a predominance among the naked wheats of soft over hard in the crops of the region. And that is what we find.

The earliest grain-finds in Olbian archaeology show a composition very similar to that of the native population, with a fondness for barley, emmer, and millet (*T. dicoccum* with *Hordeum vulgare* and *Panicum milliaceum*: Pashkevich, 1990, 116; cf. Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 71). However, *T. aestivum* is already visible in the archaic period and well enough attested in subsequent centuries, especially to the south of the city (Shcheglov, 1990). At all times, but perhaps especially in the city's earlier years, the people of Olbia could not be confident of their grain supply from season to season, so the less favored but more reliable grains were welcome enough, even for the privileged when times were hard, while the poor in the city presumably ate what they could get. The later Olbian decree in honor of Protogenes (*IOSPE* i² 32, third century BC) makes grain insecurity perfectly clear. Olbia might well suffer drought (Kryzhitskiy *et al.*, 1989, 16). However, the decree demonstrates that the issue was not simply imbalance between the size of the harvest and the number of mouths to feed (the usual focus of quantitative studies), nor even the threat of war, but also severe imbalances in the control and distribution of the grain produced. The honorand Protogenes may have saved the city from hunger, but he could do so because he had been able to make so much of the harvest his own personal property, which he could use to express his beneficence or not. It was Protogenes' possession of so much grain that contributed significantly to the problem of hunger that he was lauded for solving.

Unfortunately, our archaeological evidence for the grain consumed in the Greek cities of the region is less satisfactory than frequent generalization might lead the unwary to suppose. A rare insight for the archaic period is provided by a storage-pit with grain excavated in sixth-century Hermonassa on the Taman peninsula. We cannot be sure how typical it is of the grain stored there, but we should note the absence of cold-sensitive *T. durum*. Instead the pit contained mostly barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), with a little rye, as well as *T. aestivum* and *T. dicoccum* (Vinogradov, 1996, 84). *T. durum* was

also absent from the grains found in another pit at Myrmecium in the eastern Crimea, where traces of various other grains were identifiable (*T. aestivo-compactum*, *T. dicoccum*, *H. vulgare*, and millet (*P. miliaceum*) as well as remains of lentils. Meanwhile, in the fifth-century levels of Myrmecium and Tyritake, to its south, were found *T. aestivum* and barley (Vinogradov, 1996, 84). While information is slight, there is a degree of consistency in these results from the Bosporan kingdom, according to which soft wheat and barley are quite well represented among the grains found in the cities there. Since these cereals were already in use in the region (especially the Taman) before the arrival of significant numbers of Greeks, there is every reason to follow Yanushevich in inferring that Greek settlers adopted the locally viable grains they found under cultivation in the area (Yanushevich, 1986, 69, with Vinogradov, 1996, 85, and the older literature he cites). Further, that plausible hypothesis tends also, without undue circularity, to confirm the impression that it was soft wheat and barley that formed the staple grains of the Bosporan heartlands. The contrast with Olbia's *T. dicoccum* is clear enough, although it is to be stressed also that *T. aestivum* is well attested, especially to the south of Olbia (Shcheglov, 1990). Once more, we see differences in diet between the cities of this great region. However, the same colonial tendency is visible in both areas, namely the Greek adoption of dominant local grains. While we have seen the Greeks of the region strive to meet the needs of their Mediterranean cultural roots, it was simpler and more secure to adapt that culture, and especially its diet, to meet local conditions by following the tried-and-tested ways of the native populations insofar as their own culture permitted. And, after all, however much the cities of the region asserted their Greekness, it remained the case that from their very beginnings there had been substantial and ongoing local participation in their development. That is the key context for these cities' choices in grains, meat, fish, and the rest of their diets, so, while we can observe substantial differences between the diets of the different cities even on the north coast of the Black Sea (quite apart from the rest), there is much less sign of significant differences between the diets of the self-consciously Greek cities and their more immediate sedentary neighbors. Moreover, even with regard to nomads, it is by no means clear that their animal-based diets were as far removed from the diets of the settled agriculturalists of the region as has usually been assumed.

Only very exceptionally do we have an outsider's perspective on a specific diet in the Black Sea region. The classic example is Xenophon's account of the foodstuffs he found stored among the Mossynoeci of the southeastern coastlands. His account suggests curiosity and even admiration of local diet more than alienation or an attitude of blunt hostility. Of course, he had had a long, arduous, and experience-filled journey already, but his rather genial curiosity may give us some sense of the spirit in which Greek settlers had met and adapted to local foodstuffs around the region, changing their diets to meet their new environments and learning from their new neighbors (cf. also *An.*

The Greeks who looted the villages of the Mossynoeci, found stores in their houses of what the locals described as “last year’s bread” and fresh grain stored with its stalks. Most of this was spelt. They also found slices of dolphin salted in jars, as well as the fat of dolphin-flesh, which the Mossynoeci use as the Greeks use olive-oil. Stored above ground they found large quantities of whole, broad nuts. These are boiled up with most of the grain and made into bread. Wine was also found, which seemed vinegary in its unmixed state on account of its coarseness. But when mixed with water it became fragrant and good to drink

(Xen. *An.* 5.4.27–9).

When Herodotus went to Olbia, some decades earlier, he found an environment that intrigued him in many ways, not least through its cold climate and great fish-rich rivers. He makes no direct remarks about the diet of the city, but neither should we expect him to do so, for his focus is firmly on the Scythians, about whose diet(s) and economy he has rather a lot to say and who (together with the fact of his visit) caused him to mention Olbia at all (by contrast with cities such as Chersonesus and Panticapaeum, about which he is notoriously silent). However, like any Greek from the Mediterranean, this most exceptional of travelers will have noticed that the wheat was not the favored *T. durum*, and that olive oil and wine were much less abundant than usual, with the range of fruit and vegetables rather limited too. If he expected the array of nuts available elsewhere in the Black Sea, he was disappointed. Possibly he tried the horse-milk products about which he has so much to say, though he does not say that or attempt to describe their taste. Conceivably he tried even millet-beer and mead. We may be sure enough that the famous local honey will have appealed to him. And he can only have been bowled over by the giant river fish to be had, as his account of the Dnieper sturgeon tends to reveal. Like Xenophon, he will also have noticed that olive oil had been replaced by other fats, especially fish oils, for food, lighting, and other purposes. As for meat, he notes the absence of Scythian pigs and may well have missed his pork during his visit to a city where pigs were so few.

Taken as a whole, Olbia offered a form of Greek diet that was at least as idiosyncratic as the rest of its local culture was said to be by Greeks of the Mediterranean world. However, this was a diet that was neither unpalatable nor unsustaining, and – thanks to imports – perhaps Greek enough. And yet the Black Sea environment, especially on the northern coastlands, was sufficiently different from Mediterranean ecosystems to make the colonial experience there more challenging than in many other places. While it may be possible to see Greek colonization around the Mediterranean as the spreading of a Greek food-culture (see, e.g., Lombardo, 1995), the process was more complex and testing in the Pontus. By contrast with southern Italy, for

example, the olive and the vine could not flourish at Olbia, while settlers had also to come to terms with limitations and change in other features of their diets too, as we have seen, although these were significantly offset by new opportunities, most obviously in the availability of fine fish. For these reasons Greek experience around the Black Sea (especially in the north, but also at other places around the region, notably in wet, olive-less Colchis) and the role of food in that experience do not conform to many of the generalizations that are made about the place of food in Greek overseas settlement. Finally, it is worth stressing that the process of adapting to a new diet, as also to other features of a new environment, is much better understood when we proceed beyond the grand tales of heroic civic foundation that cities themselves favored to appreciate that, while cities such as Olbia might receive particular influxes of new inhabitants from time to time, the colonial process was very much a *longue durée*, whose beginnings were the fragmented experiences of individuals and small groups of pioneers who came from the Aegean or another part of the Black Sea region and managed to make lives for themselves among the “barbarians” of this new world. It was the successful adaptation of such men to the new environment and its local society, together with their ability to take and develop new opportunities there, that made cities such as Olbia come into being and thrive. It was in that context that the people of Olbia developed their particular form of Greek diet.

FURTHER READING

There has been little scholarly attention paid specifically to diet in the Black Sea, but most archaeological reports and all general studies have something to say on the subject, for example Gaidukevich (1971), Alexandrescu & Schuller (1990), and Braund (1994). There is also a set of bone-studies, especially for the north coast, sometimes incorporated into more general studies (e.g. Solovyov, 1999), and also as separate studies, such as that by Zhuravlyov (1983). Similarly, palaeobotanical remains are both to be found in broader studies (notably Vinogradov, 1996) and more technical accounts, such as that by Pashkevich (1990).

On the diet of Olbia, see the work of Skrzhinskaya (2000a, cf. 2000b), showing rare concern with the larger issues of diet there too. On associated Berezan, see Solovyov (1999). On wine in the Crimea and environs, Vinokurov (1999). On the productive capacity of that subregion and the particular importance of the Kuban, the work of Vinogradov (1996) is fundamental; cf. Shcheglov (1990) on modern confusions about Scythian grain. On uses of grain in the Black Sea, see also Hill & Bryer (1995); cf. Braund (1991). Stolba (2005) is excellent on fish and fish oil, with detailed bibliography; also Munk Højte (2005). Finally, Gavriluk (1999) on all aspects of Scythian society and economy. Lombardo (1995) makes a rare attempt seriously to discuss issues of food in the colonial process, a factor that

could hardly be more fundamental.

CHAPTER 29

Mesopotamia¹

Brigitte Lion

Specialists in the ancient Near East have access to a large number of sources for the study of the history of food: archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic. These last, written on clay tablets, are often well preserved and offer direct documentation of daily life. Research in this area is booming, and the following summary attempts to give an idea of the main results, while highlighting the difficulties in interpreting the material.

Sources and their Use

Archaeology sometimes brings to light storage areas for products, equipment for milling and fermentation, as well as facilities such as cooking stoves and fireplaces, in the excavations of palaces, temples, or private houses. Many utensils, often ceramic, were intended for preservation, transportation, and preparation of food. Recent excavations also make use of archaeobotanical and archaeozoological data, making it possible to determine the plant and animal species consumed and the methods used in their preparation.

Iconographic sources are less abundant in Mesopotamia than in Egypt, and only rarely deal directly with food. Cylinder seals, despite their small size (a few centimeters high), sometimes depict complex scenes of hunting, fishing, livestock rearing, agricultural activities, and banquets, especially those from the fourth and third millennia. Some reliefs found in the Neo-Assyrian palaces (ninth to seventh century BC) depict hunting parties, royal feasts, or the preparation of meals for armies in the field or for groups of deportees stopping mid-route to eat.

From the end of the fourth millennium BC, written documentation provides information of great diversity. Among the oldest tablets are accounting documents that record the receipt or distribution of goods, including food. The word lists, which catalogue hundreds of words by classifying them thematically, also appear at this time: there are lists of animals and vessels, among others. From the third millennium, long lists of rations for personnel, of food for the royal table, and of offerings to the gods and even to the dead appear. The great numbers of accounting tablets from the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur (known as Ur III, twenty-first century BC) offer a variety of information on the way the state and large estates managed cattle and agricultural products. There are even a few cooking recipes from the second millennium. Mythological texts describe the banquets of the gods, and hemerologies indicate which days it is forbidden to eat certain foods. Among

the divinatory texts, the book on dreams indicates the various foods that can be seen in a dream.

Despite this wealth of information, the difficulties are many. Written documentation does not cover all areas of life, but only those which it has been deemed necessary to record. Thus products that can be stored and maintained, foremost among them cereals, are often mentioned, because they were used as rations for workers, as wages, served as means of exchange, or were loaned. On the other hand, perishable goods such as vegetables and fruits, milk (Biga, 1994), and fish (Lion & Michel, 2000) are, for the same reason, little documented. Circulation and management of large quantities of products, in the palaces or temples, gave rise to a much more systematic use of writing than was the case for individuals. The latter group also used writing from the early second millennium, keeping records concerned with the management of their valuable goods, especially their movable property and real estate. However, it is rare to find much guidance on food in the sources of this type; daily activities and expenditures of low value were not thought worthy of being recorded.

The word lists contain the names of plants, animals, and miscellaneous products in Sumerian and, from the second millennium, in Akkadian; but to know the name is not sufficient to identify its object, and, unless other types of text help explain its meaning, a term may remain without a precise translation. The overlap between archaeology and texts, which can help to elucidate some of these issues, can also raise further questions. Thus, the plant called in Sumerian “oil plant” was identified as sesame because of its Akkadian name, *šamaššammū*, which was linked to the Arabic *simsim* and the name of this plant in other languages. However, this identification came to be challenged from the 1960s, because archaeobotanical data showed many examples of flaxseed, while sesame seeds were more rare; it was thus proposed that the “oil plant” was flax, and a massive consumption of flaxseed oil in Mesopotamia was supposed. Finally, texts indicating that the seed was sown in spring and harvested in autumn helped decide in favor of sesame and against flax, which is sown in autumn and harvested in spring (Reculeau, 2009). Sesame seeds found at several sites in Syria, Iraq, and Iran now confirm the presence of the plant in these regions.

Finally, the archaeological and iconographic sources are not explicit by themselves. The rough beveled-rim bowls, found in large numbers on sites of the fourth millennium, have received various interpretations, ranging from bread forms (compared to the forms used in Egypt) to bowls for measuring out rations (by analogy with the pictogram designating “food” at the same period). In the latter case, these containers, highly standardized, would have contained food that was probably standardized as well, which would give the land of Sumer credit for the invention of “fast food” (Pollock, 2003). The scenes depicted on many cylinder seals of the third millennium, which show

people sitting around a vat from which long stems project, are understood as convivial scenes of beer drinking, using a common container and long straws. However, it has recently been proposed, with convincing arguments, that these are activities associated with textile production: the container is a basket containing wool, with the people placed around it drawing out threads for spinning (Breniquet, 2008, 2009).

Products and Diet

Mesopotamia, watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris and crisscrossed by canals arising from these two rivers, was a fertile land (Renfrew, 1995). Its irrigated fields produced wheat, emmer, and especially barley. This provided basic food in the form of bread or porridge, and was also used for making beer. Sesame was the main source of oil. In the south, date palms provided fruit that kept well and from which an alcoholic drink, the “beer of dates,” was also made, well attested in the first millennium; other fruit trees and vegetables grew in the shade of palm trees. In the north, farming was possible without irrigation, but supplemental irrigation was sometimes necessary. The description of Herodotus (1.193) depicts the situation well. Among vegetables, texts mention onions, turnips, watercress, cucumbers, chickpeas, and lentils; botanical remains from the last three plants have been identified. As for fruits, as well as dates, texts, images and archaeological remains indicate the consumption of pomegranates, figs, apples, and grapes.

As regards stock rearing, sheep farming predominated (Hesse, 1995). Palaces and temples had huge herds, which they exploited for wool and leather, but also consumed their meat and milk; individuals had fewer livestock. The steppe of Syria, to the west of the Euphrates, is conducive to transhumant grazing of small livestock, an essential economic resource for the semi-nomadic tribes that crisscross the region. Cattle is relatively expensive and has high food needs; institutions (palaces, estates, temples) had herds, but the richest individuals possessed only a few animals, which they could rent to their neighbors at ploughing time. Cattle were draft animals first and sources of meat or milk second. Cattle and sheep were normally put to pasture, and could also receive food supplements in the form of reeds, straw, or grain rations, particularly for fattening before slaughter. Pigs, which are sedentary animals, raised by the institutions until the end of the third millennium, and thereafter mainly by individuals, provided meat and fat (Lion & Michel, 2006). Palaces and large landowners of the Ur III period raised rodents and birds; birds also feature in the Neo-Babylonian temples. Horses, whose use as draught animals became widespread in the middle of the second millennium, were rarely eaten.

The extreme south of Mesopotamia, the cradle of Sumerian civilization, was

an area of marshland. Products of hunting and fishing such as fish and turtles were consumed. Fishing was also practiced in the rivers, streams, and numerous canals.

Other occasional activities such as picking mushrooms, collecting ostrich eggs, or catching crickets provided valued supplements. Olive oil and wine (Chambon, 2009), imported from the Mediterranean region, were mostly reserved for the elite due to their high price.

An alabaster vase found at Uruk, dating from the fourth millennium, shows, on its two upper registers, a procession of offering-bearers going to the temple of the goddess Inanna, and its two lower registers show friezes of small livestock and crops: barley and possibly flax. Cylinder seals and stone reliefs dating from the same period show similar scenes, with an emphasis on cattle, sheep, and grain production. These repeat units were interpreted as symbols of abundance given by the gods, a theme that eventually ends up in literary compositions (Winter, 2007). The clearest mentions of famine are referable not to natural disasters or climatic conditions, but to human causes: sieges during wars forced residents to dispose of their possessions to buy food, and even to sell their children to save their lives, as the price of basic commodities rose inexorably.

Products available in Mesopotamia could, in theory, provide a balanced diet (Ellison, 1981, 1983). In practice, it is difficult to get an overview of the situation, which would vary according to times, places, and social conditions. The two best documented segments of society are the elites, notably the royal courts, and the laborers, slave or otherwise, who served palaces or temples and received maintenance rations for their subsistence. In both cases, the picture remains incomplete. The lists of foods provided for royal meals, found in the palace of Mari (eighteenth century BC), often refer to a particular branch of the kitchen staff; those in charge of meat, for example, or those dealing with vegetable products. In addition, the total number of guests is rarely specified. In various royal courts of the second millennium, there are lists of allocations of grain or oil to the king's wives, his children, or members of his court: the amount is hierarchical and it is obvious that goods are not all consumed, but are a source of wealth for the person who receives them. The rations paid to workers vary by gender, age, and rank. The figures are particularly abundant for the Ur III period, allowing us to calculate that the ration of barley corresponded to 3000 calories or more for men and 2000 for women, a sufficient caloric intake. However, a person eating mainly barley would be liable to deficiencies, in vitamins A and C in particular. It is unclear whether the beneficiaries were able to find further food supplements, and whether they used some barley in exchange for other types of product. Certain distribution lists of the third and second millennia concern bread, beer, oil, fish, or dates.

Storage, Shipping, and Processing

Structures for food preservation are sometimes identifiable by archaeology, especially in state buildings: in some rooms, storage jars have been found *in situ*, or the holes that held these jars in place. Texts also attest to the existence of warehouses, reserves, and stores of all kinds. Both types of source also reflect the difficulties that arose in keeping supplies safe from predators: at Mari, clay traps were intended for catching rodents, while the tablets describe cases of reserves of flour destroyed by insects.

Transport over long distances was undesirable for most food products, which were most likely consumed locally. Merchants who travelled long distances seem to have purchased the food they needed during their trip (Michel, 1997). According to the archives of Mari, soldiers carried some of their provisions, but the palace could also send them grain, flour, and beer (Durand, 1998, 397–405). Deliveries of products over medium distances were most often of cereals. Animals can be moved and, for a ritual for the dead requiring milk, the simplest solution was to bring cows to where the ceremony would take place. Fish could be dried, salted or transported in containers of water. Wine, which came from the Mediterranean or northern regions, was put into jars, which came down the course of the Euphrates by boat from Karkemis (on the modern border between Turkey and Syria) to Mari and Babylon.

Processing of products is often essential for their consumption (Ellison, 1984). Grains have to be crushed or ground. Mortars, pestles, and grinding stones have been found on many sites. In the palace of Ebla, dating to the early second millennium, archaeologists have excavated a room used for milling, with 16 saddle querns set along the walls, each with a grinding stone resting on it. Extensive economic texts of the late third millennium assign production quotas to ten or more millers: they must provide precise amounts of various types of flour each day, more or less finely ground. Various forms of bread are known, including cakes, baked in ovens of the *tannour* type.

Barley was also used as a basic ingredient for beer (Hartman & Oppenheim, 1950; Stol, 1971; Damerow, 2012). The germinated barley was fermented and the malt thus obtained was formed into loaves and then crumbled into water. After addition of yeast and possibly spices, the whole was heated and then left to ferment. Numerous types of beer are documented in the texts, designated by their quality, taste, or color. Making beer seems to have been a female activity: housewives prepared it daily for their families and innkeepers for their clients.

Milk churning and butter production are depicted on a shell mosaic dating from the mid-third millennium and found at el-'Obeid, known as the “dairy frieze” (Gouin, 1993). The texts mention clarified butter, whey, butter, and various cheeses. Sour milk or whey, fermented and dried, could be stored and used as powdered milk, to be reconstituted with water (Stol, 1993).

The literature concerning the preparation of meat products is fairly sparse. At Mari, a mosaic shell of the third millennium shows the slaughter of a ram, in a religious context. In the Neo-Assyrian reliefs, the slaughter of animals is done in a secular context, that of preparing meals. According to the eighteenth-century archives of Mari, sheep were divided into ten parts, cows into seven (Durand, 1983, 64–98). The meat could be grilled, roasted, or boiled. Texts from the time of Ur III count the bundles of reeds used in large quantities to cook cattle, pigs, lambs, and their offal, as well as poultry and fish (Steinkeller, 2008; Brunke, 2011).

Different professions were devoted to preparing and processing food, such as slaughtermen and cooks. Dozens of women worked in the kitchens in the palace of Mari, managing, milling, baking, drawing water, and so on. Some also specialized in the preparation of certain dishes or types of beer. In addition, two or three female scribes were assigned to the kitchen (Ziegler, 1999).

Recipes

The cooks had to transmit their knowledge to their apprentices orally and through on-the-job training, as very few recipes were written down. Three tablets of the early second millennium record several for a professional audience; in fact they do not specify either the quantities of ingredients or cooking times. One series of recipes deals primarily with soups and broths, with or without meat; of the products involved, the alliaceous (garlic, onion, leek) figure prominently, along with various herbs and spices. Another series concerns the preparation of birds. All the recipes have been published and studied by J. Bottéro (1995a, 1995b), who translates the recipe for preparing *kippu*-birds in broth thus: “Open them, wash them with cold water and place in a cauldron to sear them (?). Remove from the fire and clean well with cold water. Sprinkle with vinegar, and rub all over (?) with crushed mint and salt. In a clean cauldron, add mint to water and put the birds in. (Remove them from fire), clean well in cold water, and assemble all the ingredients in a pot (for finishing cooking or for presentation?). Carve and Serve” (Bottéro, 1995b, 13). Some recipes are long and elaborate, such as one for a pie of small birds. These would have been prepared for rich and refined diners with an appreciation for *haute cuisine*.

Lists of ingredients allow us to form an idea of the composition of *mersum*, a kind of cake, which we find frequently mentioned in tablets from Mari: a liquid and various fruits (dates, raisins, and figs) and condiments were added to the flour. Finally, a court recipe for a vegetable bouillon in which meat was to be cooked is known from a tablet found in the temple of Uruk, dating from the fourth century BC.

Consumption

Ordinary meals of individuals are the least well known. The tale of the “Poor Man of Nippur” mentions the plight of the hungry hero, who must sell his only garment to buy an old goat: “His face was wretched, craving meat and good drink, every day, for want of a meal, he went to sleep hungry” (Foster, 2005, 931–6, s. 8–9; Milano, 1998). Meal preparation within the family was done by women; the dowry-inventories of young girls frequently mention millstones and metal tableware, while pottery dishes of low value go unmentioned. Taverns were important social spaces. The Code of Hammurabi, in the eighteenth century, devotes several articles to laws governing tavern-keepers. They are allowed to advance credit to their customers, but are required to report any potential troublemakers to the royal authorities (§ 108–111, Roth, 1995). The tavern-keepers sometimes raised pigs, which they fed on the waste left over from brewing.

The festive meals of elites are depicted on stone tablets and cylinder seals from the third millennium. Delivery notes from palaces and estates consign large quantities of food for meals of the king or master of the house, implying the presence of numerous dining companions. The tablets of the palace of Mari, once again, provide a wealth of information on the practices of the early second millennium (Sasson, 2004; Charpin, 2013). Large meals could bring together several hundred guests. They took place in the palace courts, according to a strict etiquette. The protocol distinguished guests enjoying a seat from those seated on the ground. The place of honor was in front of the king, all of whose gestures were significant: he could for example honor a guest by presenting a particular dish. It sometimes (but rarely!) happened that a drunken sovereign performed ill-considered actions. In the first millennium, at the Neo-Assyrian court, the kings also gave banquets, especially to celebrate victories or the construction of palaces or even cities. The most spectacular was that given by Assunasirpal II, in the ninth century, to inaugurate his new capital, Kalhu. Having invited the inhabitants of the city, the Assyrian dignitaries and delegations from neighboring countries, he provided ten days of festivities for 69 574 guests, had 300 cattle slaughtered, more than 16 000 sheep, 34 000 birds, 500 does, 500 gazelles, and 10 000 jerboas, not to mention massive amounts of fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and condiments, 10 000 jars of beer, and as many wineskins. The inscription commemorating this feast refers only to raw products and says nothing of their processing, nor of the location of the meal or how it unfolded. Some bas-reliefs of the eighth century depict festivities at the palace; the guests, all men, are shown seated or standing in small groups, drinking from carved cups. An exceptional and quite unusual relief found in the palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (seventh century) is the oldest representation of the meal eaten lying down: the king, stretched out on a bed in a verdant setting, eats with the queen, who sits across from him, while women serve them, fan them, and play

music.

No food seems to have been subject to a general taboo. Various foods (pork, beef, fish, chicken, leeks, dates, cumin, etc.) are forbidden on specific dates by hemerologies, but can be eaten at other times. Others are contra-indicated for medical reasons.

Meals of the Gods

According to the account of human creation given in the Akkadian poem *Atra-Hasis*, the god Ea created men in order to relieve the gods of their work (Foster, 2005, 227–80). This work consisted in cultivating the Mesopotamian plain and draw from it a meager living. The gods, having caused the flood, are in a difficult situation: with no humans to feed them, they begin to suffer from hunger. This myth, which shows the gods dependent on humanity for their basic needs, was reflected in worship practices. Temples were houses of the gods, who inhabited them in the form of statues. These were washed, dressed, and adorned, had furniture (beds, tables) and vehicles (boats, chariots), and had to be fed daily. To this end, the temples, like the palaces, possessed fields and herds, a large staff of workers and, alongside the specialists providing for liturgical worship (priests, cantors), bakers, brewers, butchers, and cooks ensured the maintenance of the gods.

Regular offerings of food, as well as occasional offerings, were presented to the cult statues. The lists of products delivered to the deities, known since the third millennium, show that their diet was rich and balanced: breads and cakes of various kinds, the meat of large and small livestock, poultry, eggs, fish, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products (Jacquet, 2011; Llop, 2009–2010; Joannès, 2009). In the first millennium the gods consumed four meals a day. Goat and pork offerings are absent from this period, probably because their meat was held in little esteem. In Uruk in the Seleucid period, nearly 60 sheep were offered daily to all the major deities of the city, more than 20 000 head annually.

The meals of the gods followed a similar ritual pattern to that of royal meals. The statue, hidden behind screens, was served on costly tables (Joannès, 2008). In practice, large amounts of food for the gods were redistributed to the staff of the temple, according to a highly codified system of prebends; each part of a sacrificed sheep, except the liver, was earmarked for a member of the temple personal or for the maintenance of the cult. It is perhaps this practice, misunderstood, that is criticized in the book of Daniel (14). A proportion of the food of the god was also considered as the royal portion and sent to the royal palace. Additionally, the king received further deliveries, considered “leftovers” of the divine table, during festivals, just as the courtiers,

beneficiaries of royal largesse, were fed on the “leftovers” of the sovereign (Parpola, 2004; Joannès, 2013).

Meals of the Dead

If men needed to feed their gods, they needed equally to feed their dead. According to Mesopotamian religious views, humans, after their death, depart for an underground realm where, as related in the story of *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, “dust is their sustenance and clay their food” (Foster, 2005, 498–505, 1.8). In tombs, dishes once containing food are sometimes found placed near the body, suggesting that food was intended for the dead; this may have been provisions for their journey and their arrival in the Netherworld or in part for the infernal deities. Where analysis has permitted the identification of the contents of these containers, meat, fish, barley, beer, fruit (dates and apples), chickpeas, and yoghurt are attested (Scurlock, 1995, 1884; Pollock, 2003, 26). In some cases, the large numbers of dishes suggest ceremonies in which the living also participated, before closing the grave. Tablets showing considerable food expenses in connection with death are also consistent with this hypothesis: the living would share a meal with which the deceased could be associated.

In the afterlife, the dead lived a diminished life, without joy. It was up to their descendants to soften their stay through a cultic practice with two main elements: the preservation of the memory of the dead, by calling their name, and offerings, especially of food. The Akkadian name of the ritual, *kispum*, refers to the action of breaking bread and evokes the sharing of a meal.

For private individuals, the offerings consist of bread and libations of water; other products, such as garlic and fish, could be added. But again, the records concerning the rulers are the most explicit. The Ur III kings received daily worship after their death, with the sacrifice of a sheep each day. In Mari, the rhythm of *kispum* followed that of the lunar month, the ceremonies taking place at the new and full moons. Dozens of small accounts record deliveries for kings and members of the royal family who had died (Jacquet, 2002); they received different kinds of flour, breads, cakes, oil, and beer. At the same time, the kings of Babylon offered their ancestors fresh milk, butter, and turtles. The world of the dead reflected that of the living, the dead of royal families receiving more plentiful and varied “menus” than the ordinary dead.

The excavation of the royal hypogeum at Qatna, Syria, revealed tombs dating from the fourteenth century with multiple burials. The funerary structure was used for many members of the royal family, over a long period, and so had to be re-opened repeatedly. The dishes found in large quantities, as well as animal bones, are evidence of offerings to the dead and funeral meals that the family had taken, beside the dead, at funerals.

Around the Table: Discourses and Judgments

The ancient East has not left a text explicitly presenting theoretical considerations on food, or on any other subject for that matter. It is from the literary and mythological compositions, or brief remarks slipped into correspondence, that we can try to identify the ideas circulating about food and eating. These discourses reflect sometimes conflicting views, which correspond to different value systems.

The ability to produce food, from agriculture and livestock, along with clothing, defines civilization. This theme appears at the beginning of a Sumerian *tenson*, *The Debate between Grain and Sheep*: “The people of those days did not know about eating bread. (...) Like sheep they ate grass with their mouths and drank water from the ditches” (Black *et al.*, 1998, s. 20–1, 24–5). This was the point when the gods sent them sheep and grain. The same image of primitive man occurs in the *Epic of Gilgameš*, when the hero Enkidu begins life on the steppe, “Coated in hair like the god of the animals, with the gazelles he grazes on grasses, joining the throng with the game at the water-hole, his heart delighting with the beasts in the water” (George, 1999, 5, I 109–12). In the Old Babylonian version, he also drinks the milk of wild animals.

The transition to civilization requires not only the ability to produce food, but also to transform it: the *tenson* evokes bread. As for Enkidu, his entry into the world of men is through sexual intercourse and the consumption of bread and beer. His first meal is eaten with shepherds, who invite him to join them: he becomes at once a human being, so defined by his food, a sociable individual and a happy man. When Enkidu feels death approaching, the sun-god Šamaš reminds him of the benefits of the courtesan who initiated him: “O Enkidu, why curse Šamhat the harlot, who fed you bread that was fit for a god, and poured you ale that was fit for a king?” (George, 1999, 58, 134–6 VII); grateful, Enkidu blesses her. These same motifs, food and sociability, reappear in the Old Babylonian version, after the death of Enkidu, when a strange female innkeeper-philosopher, who resides at the end of the world, tries to persuade Gilgameš to return to the living: “But you, Gilgameš, let your belly be full, enjoy yourself always by day and by night! (...) For such is the destiny [of mortal men]” (George, 1999, 124). It is significant that this advice comes from a woman whose activities must be precisely the preparation of beer.

The quality and preparation of foods, the degree of interest taken in them and the choice of dining companions could distinguish between peoples and valorize certain lifestyles. Thus nomads are sometimes placed, from a city-dweller’s point of view, midway between the savage and the civilized; the Amorites are defined in a Sumerian text as “those who are unfamiliar with grain.” But against this urban disdain for a way of life deemed too uncouth,

we sometimes, though rarely, encounter the exaltation of difficult living conditions and a straightened diet. This pattern applies in particular to soldiers in the field. It appears in the *Epic of Zimri-Lim*, King of Mari: in wartime the king “never drinks except water out of skins (...) His men eat raw meat: They take heart and increase in strength.” This regimen is similar to that which is praised in a work of the first millennium, the *Epic of Erra*, god of war. His aides encourage him to go with the following arguments: “Shall we eat the bread of women, like those who do not go out on campaign? (...) The food of the cities, esteemed as it is, is not worth a cake cooking in the ashes, sweet beer is not worth water from a skin” (Marelllo, 1992).

This contempt for urban fine dining, which goes against the ideals of wellness that most literary texts describe, sets up a system of oppositions (Reiner, 1967). On one side processed and prepared foods are prized, such as beer and fine flour, which the townspeople enjoyed. On the other hand, according to an opposite ethic, these same foods are viewed as shameful, while a simple regime is valued, based on rough foods, summarily prepared by the very people who eat them, a sign of independence, or even eaten without any preparation. Water and raw meat, which are otherwise considered as characteristic of “barbarians,” become desirable, even heroic, in a military context: they grant this heroism to the warrior, who finds in them a symbolic route opposite to that of Enkidu, from beer to water, from city to steppe. They also characterize an economy of violence and predation, where everyone snatches whatever they can from nature (Lion, 2003).

Without going so far as clear-cut oppositions, the relationship with food can also distinguish people within the same social group. Spending too much time or attention on the pleasures of the table was objectionable if these activities took precedence over others deemed more important. We find an echo of this in the second millennium, in the correspondence of Assyrian merchants: a father is outraged about his son: “Let him learn respect (for people)! He must not think about nothing but bread and beer. He must be a respectable man,” as if uprightness in business accorded ill with the pleasures of the body (Michel, 1997).

Other fatherly advice, almost contemporary, was sent by the king of Upper Mesopotamia, Samsi-Addu, to his son Yasmah-Addu, king of Mari. A set of letters criticized the latter for leading a merry life with his servants. What is being criticized is not the practice of parties and banquets in themselves, which are normal for a sovereign, but excessive, and more particularly ill-chosen, expenditure, because the king should focus on his soldiers, on whom the security of the country depended. “Instead of opening jars and spending money, give satisfaction to the soldiers (...) Install them at your side, that they may maintain your defense and thus strengthen the foundations of Mari. Let them be constantly invited to dinner in your presence. Never offer them a contemptible meal, but see to it that they have everything in abundance”

(Durand, 1997, 60–6). These then are the dining companions and royal behavior towards them that are at issue: the sovereign’s table is a means of government, which manifests its political choices (Charpin, 2013).

Food also distinguished men from gods. Demons from the underworld seem condemned to a perpetual fast; they are those “who know not food, who know not drink, who eat no sprinkled flour, who drink no poured water, (...) who never chew sharp-tasting garlic, who eat no fish, who eat no leeks ” (*Dumuzi’s Dream* 111–13, 117–18; Black *et al.*, 1998). The heavenly gods, whose banquets are celebrated in mythological texts, seem by way of contrast to enjoy abundant food comparable to that of kings; beer plays a major part in divine festivities. However, at least one account indicates that gods and men do not share the same food: the story of *Adapa*. Summoned to the sky, the hero refuses to eat “the bread of life” and drink “the water of life” offered by the god Anu, and cannot, therefore, remain with the gods and share their immortality, and even less so with mankind (Foster, 2005, 525–30, B, 77–8).

Only the most summary discussion of Mesopotamian literature has been possible here: in fact, this literature extends over nearly three millennia and, while large trends can be identified, local variations and changes are certain, though sometimes difficult to identify precisely due to the discontinuity of the documentation. The symbolic role of food and the imagery associated with it would in particular require more precise study. Thus, in the *Epic of Gilgameš*, the hero, seeking immortality, is nevertheless unable to resist sleep: it is the loaves of bread that are brought to him daily, and their state of decay upon his awakening, that make him aware of the passage of time and the impossibility of attaining his goal. Lacking immortality, he would have been able to maintain his youth perpetually by eating a magical plant, which a snake steals. As in *Genesis*, the human condition is seen as intimately linked to food.

FURTHER READING

The food specialist for the Mesopotamian world was Jean Bottéro, author of multiple articles on the subject and two fundamental books (1995b, 2002). The bibliography of Bottéro figures in the work of Faivre, Lion, & Michel (2009, 309–41). In the latter work, five papers deal with food. See also the articles collected by Milano (1994,) and Grottanelli & Milano (2004).

Dictionaries and encyclopedias offer helpful articles on the subject, especially those by Ebeling *et al.* (1932–: e.g., the articles “Küche,” “Mahlzeit,” “Speiseverbot”) and Joannès (2001), which contains many articles on plants, animals, and everyday life.

Concerning the consumption of products, consult Postgate & Powell (1984–). This series includes eight volumes, of which six are fundamental to the history of food: I (cereals: 1984), II (vegetables and nuts: 1985), III (vegetables and fruits: 1987), VI (trees and timber in Mesopotamia: 1992),

VII and VIII (domestic animals of Mesopotamia: Part I (1993) and Part II (1995)).

A convenient introduction in French is *Banquets et fêtes au Proche-Orient ancien*, *Dossiers d'Archéologie* (2003). More than two dozen scholarly articles, fruit of a research seminar on the subject, were published by Michel (2010) and can be downloaded at <http://www.mae.u-paris10.fr/arscan/L-alimentation-dans-l-Orient,888.html>).

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 30

Food in Ancient Egypt¹

Pierre Tallet

Introduction

To discuss ancient Egyptian cuisine is something of a challenge. Although a rich iconographic repertoire allows any visitor to the Nile Valley today to obtain extensive information on the different cycles of agricultural production – these are represented in a very repetitive manner in the tombs of important officials from the Pharaonic period – we have no further concrete information, with rare exceptions, to give us a clearer picture of the recipes used at that time: no cuneiform tablets such as those discovered in Mesopotamia, which enable us to reconstruct in outline “the world’s oldest cuisine” (Bottéro, 2002); no book of Apicius to list, albeit succinctly, the ingredients of the dishes. Any attempt to discuss the Egyptian diet must therefore be based on a very heterogeneous set of sources: the medical papyri that – in the recipes of medicinal preparations – give an idea of cooking techniques in use at the time of the pharaohs; accounting records that detail products received, for example by major religious institutions or the royal kitchens. The many archaeological sources should of course be added to these – whether it be spoil heaps found on ancient sites, or food offerings deposited at all times in the tombs, which can sometimes allow a more direct idea of what the Egyptian diet truly entailed.

Early research that addressed the theme of food has mainly relied on descriptions of reliefs and wall paintings of tombs (Montet, 1925; Keimer, 1939; Vandier, 1964; Wild, 1966). Others have sought additional information in the sources of Greek and Roman times, often more abundant (Darby, Ghalioungui, & Grivetti, 1977), the effect obtained being sometimes a too “static” vision of Egyptian food culture over a period spanning more than three millennia of history. The most recent studies now take the evolution of food practices throughout the Pharaonic period into account (Peters-Desteract, 2005). A genuine criticism of available iconographic sources has also emerged, combining detailed analysis of the stages of preparation of various categories of food (Ikram, 1995), while taking care of the selectivity and religious orientation of these sources (e.g. Verhoeven, 1984). The latest research in this area relies heavily on the analysis of organic remains, which often helps clarifying the different techniques of product development (Samuel, 2000; Guasch Jané, 2008).

When combined, all these approaches allow, if not a detailed reconstruction of

the menu of the Egyptians, at least a reasonable idea of what might have appeared at their tables, keeping in mind the extreme disparity that existed in this area between members of the social elite, who have left us much of the available literature, and the more modest population, who made up the majority of the country.

Bread, Beer, and Agriculture

The foundation of the Egyptian diet was bread (*te*), or more precisely the dozens of varieties of bread that were produced in the households of the country, from wheat and barley, the principal grains grown in the Nile Valley. Once again, the scenes depicted in tombs essentially inform us as to the simplest method of manufacture of the product: workers are represented carrying out the steps of processing the grain into flour, screening and refining it; finally, we see them add water to prepare a form of dough, then place it into forms for baking (Wild, 1966). More rarely, steps that seemingly correspond to the addition of yeast or salt to the dough are shown – but the use of leaven seems certain in some cases: in some scenes, it is stated that the dough is ready for cooking because it has received the *hez*, a term that most probably signifies leaven (Montet, 1925, 239). It is likely that the most commonly prepared bread was a very dense bread, baked for about 40 minutes in embers before being removed from the mold (Lehner, 1997, 236–7). The abundance of these loaf pans, which were made mostly of coarse ceramics intended for single use, on all Egyptian archaeological sites demonstrates the importance of this very compact type of bread in the diet of the Egyptians, especially in humbler circles. However, the observation of many “fossilized” loaves found deposited in tombs as offerings nuances this view quite a bit. Egyptian cuisine in fact allowed for the preparation of bread in all possible shapes: flat, conical, spherical, sometimes molded into shapes of objects or animals, and extremely varied ingredients could be added to the dough for sweetening or aroma: lupine seeds, coriander, a decoction of figs, and poppy or ryegrass seeds (Samuel, 1992). Cooking methods, moreover, varied widely: while most of the scenes show bread baking in molds over an open fire, some representations show direct cooking of cakes, which are simply placed on the conical surface of a furnace, heated from the inside. Finally, archaeological excavations in the artisan village of Deir el-Medina (Thebes, New Kingdom) led to the discovery of a genuine bread oven, barrel shaped, with a diameter of 80 cm and a height of 75 cm, for baking leavened bread on a shelf separated from the ashes of the hearth (Bruyère, 1939, 72–6). This oven model is regularly represented in tombs of the same period, where it is associated with scenes of both bread baking and pastry making.

Note also that the same bread-making process as commonly used for barley and wheat could be adapted to widely divergent ingredients; one could also make bread using, for example, nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*) (Tallet, 2003a,

44–7) or jujubes (*Ziziphus spina christi*) (Kamal, 1912). According to Herodotus (2.92), the heart of the white lotus could also be used to manufacture a kind of bread using the same process.

Alongside bread, beer (*henqet*) also played an important role in the Egyptian diet. The stages of its preparation are regularly depicted in reliefs decorating tombs. A certain amount of wheat or barley was first crushed, three-quarters of which were kneaded with water to form a dough, to which the yeast was added. This dough was made into loaves, which were lightly baked, so as not to destroy the enzymes and yeast in the bread. The remaining quarter of the crushed grain was moistened and exposed to air for some time, and then crushed while still wet. Then the real brewing process can be said to have begun: the pieces of bread were fragmented and placed in a container with water, the wet crushed wheat added, and possibly a little of a previous batch of beer to stimulate fermentation, which lasted for one day. Once fermentation was completed, the preparation was passed through a sieve basket, perhaps with a linen cloth acting as a filter, and put into jars. Numerous depictions of the Old Kingdom (c. 2650–2150 BC) and Middle Kingdom (c. 2050–1650 BC) show these two operations, which directly preceded the finished product. We are enabled to easily understand the recipe followed in the making of this popular beer, low in alcohol and high in carbohydrates, since it has in fact never stopped being produced in Egypt and Nubia, where it is still known under the names *bouza* and *merissa* (Lucas, 1962, 10–16). Many other types of beer, more luxurious and probably meant to be kept for some time in the cellar, are also known: the most recent analyses of the literature suggest that such varied ingredients as figs, lupine seeds, and honey could be added to flavor it and to raise its sugar and alcohol content. Egyptian elites also seem to have enjoyed wine, whose production on Egyptian soil is recorded from the time of Nagada IIIb (c. 3200 BC), even before the formation of the first Pharaonic dynasty (see below).

Finally, a few words may be said about the other crops of ancient Egypt: what is striking, in fact, is the relatively small number of fruits and vegetables that were grown, compared with what are found today in the country. The fruits that are familiar to us are reduced, in this world, to the triad of dates, raisins, and figs; pomegranates, apples, and olives, on the other hand, seem not to have been acclimated to Egyptian soil until the New Kingdom (Tallet, 2004). On the other hand, it should be noted that many other fruits, whose production has now become anecdotal, were essential in the diet at the time of the Pharaohs: this is the case, notably, with figs sycamore, nuts of the *dôm*-palm, and fruits of the *persea* tree (Baum, 1988). Moreover, many carbohydrate foods were available: chickpeas, lentils, lupins, bamiehs, and beans are clearly documented. Finally, the Egyptians had a wide variety of fresh vegetables: garlic, onions, leeks, celery, cabbage, radishes, lettuce, cucumbers, gourds, melons, and watermelons (Charpentier, 1981; Manniche, 1989).

Meat, Poultry, and Fish

Meat was a luxury dish in Egypt: it is perhaps for this reason that scenes of slaughter are so often represented on the walls of tombs of high officials. The animals consumed regularly were often wild game: many types of gazelle (oryx, ibex, hartebeest, addax), which have for the most part disappeared from Egypt today, are regularly represented in scenes of funerary offerings alongside smaller animals, such as the hare and the hedgehog (Ikram, 1995, 5–39). Several domestic animals were also raised for meat, first and foremost being cattle, the noble animal *par excellence*: the maintenance of herds was so important to the Egyptian monarchy that, from the most ancient times, the biannual census of animals carried out by the administration was the basis for timekeeping. Besides cattle, goats, sheep, and pigs were reared. This last animal is rarely represented in Egyptian iconography (in two millennia of history, fewer than a dozen scenes show them in an agricultural context), but excavations of urban food dumps shows that they were regularly consumed by less privileged social groups. The Egyptians also had at their disposal a wide variety of birds: some, such as the goose, pigeon, duck, and crane, were raised, and sometimes fattened – many other species were captured with hexagonal nets (herons, quail, partridge, and avocets). Finally, fishing in the Nile, practiced in all its forms by teams of specialists using hooks, nets, and traps, produced large quantities of fish such as carp, perch, mullet, oxyrynkhos, synodontis, lepidotes, tilapia, and catfish – more than 20 different species are represented in the Pharaonic reliefs (van Elsbergen, 1997; Ikram, 1995, 34–9).

The problem with the kitchen scenes transmitted by the Egyptian iconographic sources arises from their subjectivity: the most prestigious animals are represented more often, as are the cooking methods that were considered most suitable in the funerary context to which most extant compositions belong (Ikram, 1995, 42–4). Thus, only in the case of the butchering of beef is there enough detail to allow us to understand the sequence of operations for slaughter practiced by the Egyptians: the animal was laid on the ground, had its throat cut, and was emptied of its blood (which was carefully collected in a container), then skinned and gutted. The tripe was also collected and consumed in ways that remain unclear (documents sometimes mention “stirred tripe”). Finally the butchering of the carcass took place, during which most of the cuts of meat were inventoried. Regarding animal preparation, the cooking method most often presented is grilling, perhaps because it is a very fragrant operation and thus particularly suitable for the funeral offering – the main purpose of the tomb scenes that are our principal sources (Verhoeven, 1984). A familiar scene depicts cooks before a small home brazier on which they are cooking joints of meat, poultry, or fish that have been previously stuck on a type of skewer. The fire is fanned at the same time with a small plant fan. In some cases, more complex arrangements

may be depicted: in the tomb of Ukhhotep at Meir (Middle Kingdom), a proper rotisserie is shown. The entire carcass of a calf is represented in the process of cooking, while two men, one on each side of the posts of this installation, rotate the spit on which it is placed.

However, it is certain that the Egyptians also cooked by simmering in large pots, which are more rarely, but still regularly, represented. Scenes of this type of cooking are often directly related to scenes of slaughter: the pieces of meat are cut, sometimes beaten to tenderize them, and placed in a container simmering over the fire. In some cases, the cook is shown in the process of stirring the mixture to blend it, and of tasting the preparation. Unfortunately, only the main ingredient is represented in this case: we can distinguish, according to the case, joints of meat, a whole bird, or even fish in the pot, but no information is given as to what embellishments were added. We know, however, that the Egyptians had at their disposal a wide variety of herbs and spices, concerning which they had very specific knowledge – the various medical papyri that have survived, which give recipes for many remedies, also well illustrate the precise usage of these plants (Bardinet, 1995). Dill, parsley, thyme, sesame, cumin, and fenugreek are regularly named in these sources, and would have been in regular use in the kitchen. Other herbs, such as mint, chervil, and oregano, have not been identified in the Egyptian lexicon, but have been discovered in an archaeological context, demonstrating their use in antiquity.

One of the most important objectives of the Pharaonic administration was the long-term storage of the various food products levied each year in rural areas of the country. Without the establishment of these reserves, the mechanism of the state itself could not have functioned. The logical consequence of this was that the ancient Egyptians became masters of many techniques for preserving meat, and scenes of the processing of these foods – operations vital to the country – appear regularly in the iconographic documentation. Archaeological excavations have also yielded numerous indicators suggesting this concern with food-preservation: labeled storage *amphorae* have been found at the sites of the great royal palaces of the New Kingdom, at Malqata in the Theban region, or at Tell el-Amarna in Middle Egypt, containing notably animal fat, preserved birds, and the “battered meat” from the royal butchers.

One way to preserve food was doubtless the production of a kind of confit: many clues, in scenes of food production, indicate the importance attached to animal fat in all its forms. Several tables show us that it was recovered after slaughter of animals, to be stored in containers, sometimes precisely labeled. In addition, the many scenes of forced feeding of animals appearing in the mastabas of the Old Kingdom, relating to birds (cranes, geese, and ducks), but also pigs and even hyenas, could have been intended to facilitate this kind of preparation, which, unlike drying or salting, allows storage of meat while maintaining a high nutritional value. A number of scenes mentioned above,

showing cooking in a pot, which are closely associated with butchering of carcasses, might actually depict the cooking of certain pieces of meat in fat, before they are packed in jars (Tallet, 2003a, 61–2).

It is also certain that the Egyptians made use of several drying processes. In the context of skinning the carcasses of cattle, the butchers are regularly represented cutting triangular pieces of meat, which they then hang on a line. These representations show the making of a variety of dried meats, very simple in principle, and making use of precisely the ingredients to which the Egyptians had access. They cut thin strips of meat, which were then covered with a mixture of spices including salt, cumin, coriander, celery, garlic, and cinnamon, before drying them in the sun. A modern reconstruction of this process has shown that meat treated in this way can easily be preserved for one year (Ikram, 1995, 149–54).

A final technique most certainly in use was the preservation of meat and fish using a brine solution containing at least 20% salt. Some scenes of processing of birds could, indeed, clearly refer to this process: the animals are exposed for some time in the sun – to eliminate certain bacteria – then probably placed directly into jars containing brine. According to the testimony of Herodotus (2.77), given at the end of the Pharaonic era, the same treatment was also applied to fish. In the latter case, modern Egyptian cuisine has certainly kept the tradition of antiquity, in the preparation of what is now called *fesikh*. The fish is washed, scaled, cleaned, and steeped in salt, and then placed at the bottom of a pottery vessel, which is gradually filled. Between each layer of fish is sandwiched a layer of salt, and weights are placed on the entire contents of the jar, which, by their pressure, allow the salt to penetrate the fish tissues. Ten days are enough to obtain the final product – still popular today in Egypt (Wissa-Wassef, 1971). In the same vein, the Egyptians were probably the first to have produced the *botargo*: this preparation, which is known throughout the Mediterranean world, uses the eggs of grey mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), a fish that seems to have been particularly popular in ancient Egypt. The pockets of orange eggs found in female mullets are extracted, cleaned, and placed in salt. They are then pressed between planks, before drying them on wire mesh racks. Virtually every stage of the development of this product is represented on the walls of decorated tombs of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, with particular emphasis on the extraction of the ovaries of the fish, which are represented in the form of rods lying beside the gutted fish (Keimer, 1939; Vandier, 1964).

All available sources for Egyptian cuisine thus point to the existence of a world to which we have very limited access, where one glimpses the complexity both of certain food preparations and of the codification of table manners, of which certain texts that have survived from the wisdom literature – such as the teachings of Ptahhotep or of Kagemni – in turn give us an overview. Only multidisciplinary research, combining the analysis of organic

remains found in tombs and spoil heaps with lexicographical studies, analysis of paintings and reliefs, and anthropological observation, will allow us to know a little more about the food of the ancient Egyptians in the long term, which had only a few points in common with that which we can experience today in the Nile Valley.

A Product Apart: the Wine of the Egyptians

Pharaonic Egypt was predominantly a beer-drinking land – and it is true that the climate of the country, where the vine is not native, is not *a priori* the most suitable for the production of this drink (Baum, 1988, 135–48). Yet paradoxically it is Egypt that gives us one of the oldest documentations of viticulture, the impressions of seals found on jar-stoppers from the earliest dynasties, and multiple figurative scenes from the great mastabas of the Old Kingdom, where are recorded, in a somewhat stereotypical fashion, the main steps of wine making: scenes of harvest, pressing, and bottling in jars (James, 1996). Recent archaeological discoveries now suggest that the vine had been grown in Egypt since the pre-dynastic period (Naqada IIIb), to produce a beverage reserved for the social elite, by the princes prior to the political unification of the country (Hendrickx & Bavay, 2002, 72–6).

It is certainly with the New Kingdom that we have the most detailed information about this drink: at that time, indeed, the Pharaonic administration had progressively developed the custom of labeling storage jars containing a wide variety of food with a small inscription in hieratic, attached to the upper surface of the jar, and providing information as to its contents (Tallet, 2003b). Wine jars are thus accompanied by a very detailed manifest, indicating the production year of the jar, the wine's quality, the name of its institutional recipient, the growing region, and the winemaker responsible. Taken together, these data allow us to draw a map of the vineyards of this period – clearly located mainly in the Nile delta – and better to understand the conditions of its production: the descriptions available to us carefully distinguish between different qualities of wine: good wine (*irep nefer*), doubly good wine (*irep nefer nefer*), and sweet wine (*irep nedjem*).

Among the varieties of wine regularly mentioned a mysterious product called *shedeh* figures: it is clearly, in the minds of the Egyptians themselves, a highly alcoholic liquor, of superior quality, the liqueur-like character of which is regularly extolled. Several hypotheses have been made as to its identity: pomegranate wine (one of the references to this product effectively associates it with a delivery of pomegranates and raisins – which is not in itself a very convincing statement), honeyed wine, mead, or mulled wine. Analyses of organic remains found in *shedeh* jars have recently proved incontrovertibly that this was a wine with a red color (Guasch Jané, 2008, 29–32, 52–3, 62), while all available sources point towards the latter interpretation of the word.

Indeed, several later texts refer explicitly to the cooking of at least one part of this preparation: it is possible that the Egyptians obtained in this way a concentrated grape juice comparable to the well-known *defrutum* of the Roman world, which could then be used to sweeten the wine and increase its alcohol content (Tallet, 1995, 2010). More generally, by analyzing all of these sources one gets the sense, without being able to prove it, that many techniques of wine manufacture that are well attested in the Roman period had in part already been tried in this period.

FURTHER READING

Of a number of recent books of general interest on food in ancient Egypt, mention may especially be made of the large two-volume work of Darby, Ghalioungui, & Grivetti, published in 1977, which however can be criticized for its lack of historical perspective, the authors' approach to all sources, Pharaonic as well as Greco-Roman, lacking in differentiation. Many other general works, some quite brief, have appeared in recent years, among which may be mentioned, among others, those by Bresciani (1997), Wilson (1988), Tallet (2003a), and Peters-Destéract (2005). Several monographs have also been published, dealing with more specific domains of Egyptian cuisine: the study of Ikram (1995) may be cited as a good example, as well as the work of Guasch Jané on wine (2008). The innovative research of D. Samuel, notably on Egyptian beer, are also worthy of mention (e.g. Samuel, 2000). The volume in which this last work appears contains several other very useful papers on specific aspects of food production, notably by M.A. Murray: "Cereal production and processing" (Murray, 2000a), "Viticulture and wine production" (Murray, Boulton, & Heron, 2000), and "Fruit, vegetables, pulses and condiments" (Murray, 2000b), accompanied in each case by an abundant bibliography.

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 31

“Celtic” Food: Perspectives from Britain

Martin Pitts

Food consumption is a crucial factor distinguishing the so-called “Celtic” societies of northwest Europe from their Mediterranean counterparts. It is perhaps unique as a sphere of social life that is comparatively well served by both written sources and material evidence, whilst simultaneously lacking much in the way of integration between archaeological and historical approaches. This chapter aims to outline the potential of food to provide insights into “barbarian” pre-Roman cultures in temperate Europe, placing particular emphasis on the social function of food and drink, and considering both written and archaeological evidence. However, in a short chapter it is impossible to do justice to the heterogeneity of practices and wide range of evidence pertaining to foodways in “Celtic” Europe, and for this reason the present chapter will focus on Britain, bringing evidence from further afield where relevant. The terms “Celts” and “Celtic” are avoided, as largely unhelpful constructs that serve to perpetuate the falsehood of a culturally unified and homogenous Europe prior to Roman incorporation (Jones, 1997; James, 1999; Wells, 2001).

Whilst food and its assorted remains and accoutrements have always featured prominently in the archaeology of Iron Age Europe, it has rarely been studied as a discrete topic, which is surprising given the comparative wealth of archaeological and historical studies of Roman food (Alcock, 2001; Cool, 2006; Garnsey, 1999). Consequently, it is relatively easy to find scholarship on, for example, the role of food vessels as proxies for invasion, migration, or diffusion of people or ideas (Hawkes & Dunning, 1930), the relative significance of flora and fauna in changing agricultural regimes (van der Veen & O’Connor, 1998), and the significance of imported Mediterranean wine amphorae as prestige goods deriving from the expanding Roman world-system (Cunliffe, 1988). More recently, it has become popular to consider the importance of feasting rituals (Ralph, 2007; Pitts, 2010; van der Veen & Jones, 2007), which can sometimes be more archaeologically visible than everyday consumption. In view of these trends, this chapter addresses the potential of the study of food to illuminate a range of important themes for understanding the mechanisms of Iron Age societies in Europe, which have no small implications for the comprehension of the provincial cultures that followed in the wake of westward Roman expansion.

Nature and Culture

One of the greatest differences between diet in Iron Age temperate Europe and that of the Greco-Roman world is the reliance of the former on animal fats as opposed to olive oil, a phenomenon that continued to separate Mediterranean and northern European cuisine until the last century. In addition to this broad geographical and climactic distinction, further significant diversity existed within and between regions in the exploitation of animals and plants in Celtic Europe, despite past tendencies to view it as a culturally unified whole. This observation is compounded by the variable intensity of archaeological fieldwork and the quality of the zooarchaeological and archaeobotanical records across northern Europe, which are differentially affected by regional soil conditions, the depth of burial, the type of archaeological feature (e.g. pits, ditches, and wells), and the resistance of different species of flora and fauna to taphonomic decay processes (Maltby, 1996, 18–19; Pitts (Archaeology) in this volume).

Although localized variations in fieldwork, taphonomy, and climatic conditions are common, some regional generalizations can nevertheless be made. The principal source of archaeological evidence for plants in the Iron Age typically comes in the form of charred grains and seeds, allowing the identification of the main types of cereal crop grown, and potentially providing insights into the scale of production and storage (van der Veen & Jones, 2007). In the British Iron Age, spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) was most prevalent, being characterized by its ability to grow on a range of soil types, hardiness in cold weather, and resistance to pests and diseases, taking over in importance from emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*), which had been previously favored in the Bronze Age and Neolithic periods (Jones, 1996). Bread wheat, now a major global agricultural product, was an important crop at only a small number of sites towards the end of the Iron Age, as it is a free-threshing species more suited to intensive modern farming methods due to its tendencies to suffer in competition with weeds and to require more fertile soils than spelt and emmer (van der Veen, 1992, 74; Jones, 1996, 32). Six-row barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) was also a common crop in the Iron Age, with the hulled form predominating over the naked form, possibly due to its increased use as animal fodder and because of changing climatic conditions resulting in an increase in rainfall (van der Veen, 1992, 74–5). Oats (*Avena*) were first grown wild in the Iron Age, but soon became cultivated, whereas evidence for rye (*Secale cereale*) is scarcer and typically dates to the end of the period (Jones, 1996; Alcock, 2001). As with the faunal evidence, where botanical analyses have been conducted the southern British oppida (large enclosed settlements with some urban characteristics) are distinguished from other Iron Age sites through evidence of wider trade networks. For example, the presence at Silchester of the weed *Agrostemma githago*, which is associated with Mediterranean cereals, points towards the importation of cereal crops

from continental Europe in the early phases of the site.

Evidence for meat consumption in the Iron Age largely comes from excavated assemblages of animal bones, which in Britain are typically dominated by the major domestic species of cattle, sheep, pig, horse, and dog, of which cattle and sheep are by far the most common. Pig remains are usually much scarcer, with the exception of the high proportions discovered at southern British oppida (e.g. Camulodunum – modern Colchester – and Calleva Atrebatum – modern Silchester), and other contemporary sites with strong continental European links such as Skeleton Green, Hertfordshire (Pitts, 2010). In contrast, pigs formed a more substantial component of meat consumption in the area between northern Gaul and the German limes (Méniel, 2001a; Kreuz, 1999). Such findings reinforce the limited Classical descriptions of Gallic feasting, which typically emphasize large quantities of meat being eaten with minimal elaboration or seasoning. Posidonius (*FGrH* 87 F 15 = fr. 67 Edelstein-Kidd) noted that

The food consists of a few loaves of bread and large quantities of meat that is either boiled or roasted on the coals or on spits. They consume the meat in a simple if lion-like way, taking whole joints in both hands and biting it off

(in Ath. 151e (transl. Olson)).

This is reinforced by Strabo, writing of the Belgae of northern Gaul: “food they have in great quantities, along with milk and flesh of all sorts, but particularly the flesh of hogs, both fresh and salted” (4.4.3, transl. Jones). Whereas pork was a comparatively rare occurrence on Iron Age sites in Britain, meat from fowl and wild animals appears to have been even scarcer, adding credence to Caesar’s observation that the eating of fowl and certain other wild animals was taboo: “hares, fowl, and geese they think it unlawful to eat, but rear them for pleasure and amusement” (*B Gall.* 5.12, transl. Handford & Gardner).

Again, oppida and related sites such as Skeleton Green form the main exception to this rule (Maltby, 1996; Albarella, 2007), where fowl such as chicken feature in higher proportions, yet as such sites post-date Caesar’s invasion his account remains uncontradicted.

In near continental Europe fowl and wild animals are less scarce on late Iron Age sites than in Britain, with higher proportions of species such as red deer and wild boar indicating that hunting was of greater importance (Kreuz, 1999). For the exploitation of marine and freshwater resources, the review by Dobney and Ervynck (2007) of the evidence for fishing in the North Sea area highlights several discrepant trends. Despite the introduction of improved methods for retrieving fish bones in recent years, Iron Age sites in Britain are notorious for their lack of evidence for fish consumption, suggesting that such an absence was a matter of cultural choice. For Gaul, the zooarchaeological

record in Belgium is adversely affected by poor conditions of preservation, yet evidence for the exploitation of freshwater fish in the Roman period implies a similar situation to that in Britain for pre-Roman times. In contrast, in the Netherlands there is much wider evidence for the exploitation of fish in the Iron Age (both marine and freshwater), underlining the diversity in dietary practices in the wider region. Similarly, oppida sites again stand out from their respective local trends, with evidence for the importation of Spanish mackerel at Skeleton Green (Britain), and Mediterranean albacore tuna at the Titelberg (Luxembourg), highlighting the broader cultural links of such settlements with the Roman world.

Whilst differences between Britain and the near Continent in the consumption of fish, poultry, and wild animals may be dismissed as a minor regional variation, recent research suggests that such discrepancies have deeper cultural meaning. Hill's (1995) meticulous study of patterns of rubbish disposal at Iron Age sites in Wessex highlighted graded distinctions in the treatment of different species in archaeological deposits, with the main domesticates (sheep and cattle) and wild animals constituting polar opposites, and horses and dogs seemingly dealt with as intermediaries. Whereas cattle and sheep were the most common species consumed domestically, they were the least likely to receive special treatment as ABGs (articulated bone groups), whereby complete or partial skeletons, limbs, and skulls lacking butchery marks appear to have been deliberately placed into the ground. In contrast, although rarely consumed for meat on Iron Age settlements, wild animals and birds were the most likely species to be treated in this ritualized fashion as ABGs. Hill suggests that such distinctions reflected aspects of Iron Age cosmological understandings of the boundary between culture and nature, with the special treatment of wild animals (and to a lesser extent horses and dogs) hinting at a reverence for nature that may have included prohibitions on their everyday consumption as food. Although hunting and fishing evidently played a very minor role in the diet of Iron Age Wessex, it is likely that such activities were probably governed by cultural restrictions determining the special occasions on which the consumption or sacrifice of wild animals could be permissible.

The Cultural Politics of Alcohol

The most detailed and explicit Classical accounts of Celtic foodways invariably involve the consumption of alcohol, a sphere of social practice in which great differences existed with that of elite Roman society.

Consequently, most descriptions are clouded by cultural and political biases stressing the comparative superiority of Roman culture, its own corruptness through unchecked luxury, or simply a lack of detail borne of an absence of first-hand experience or interest in such matters. Although these deficiencies are arguably balanced by the ever-increasing corpus of archaeological

evidence, the accounts of individuals such as Posidonius (accessible via Diodorus of Sicily and Athenaeus), Julius Caesar, and Strabo nevertheless provide unique perspectives on pre-Roman foodways. A recurrent feature of many such texts focuses on the Gallic consumption of alcohol, particularly wine, whose consumption neat was seen as a defining characteristic of barbarians, running contrary to Greek and Roman practices, which required wine to be mixed with water (Murray, 1990b, 6; Dunbabin, 1993). A good example comes from Diodorus of Sicily – based on the original reports of Posidonius, who visited Gaul in the 90s BC– (Woolf, 1998, 49), who stated

the Gauls are exceedingly addicted to the use of wine and fill themselves with the wine which is brought to their country by merchants, drinking it unmixed, and since they partake of this drink without moderation by reason of their craving for it, when they are drunken they fall into a stupor or a state of madness

(5.26, transl. Oldfather).

Similarly, as stated in Athenaeus, Posidonius (*FGrH* 87 F 15 = fr. 67 Edelstein-Kidd) reported that

The rich drink wine imported from Italy or Massaliote territory; it is consumed unmixed, although occasionally they put a little water into it. Poorer people drink wheat-beer with honey added, or in most cases without it; they refer to this as *korma*

(Ath. 152c, transl. Olson).

In contrast to the more ethnographic approach of Posidonius, the accounts of Caesar (relating to northern Gallic tribes in the mid-first century BC) are typically more politicized. In particular, Caesar seems to admire groups such as the Ambiani, who “would not allow the importation of wine and other luxuries, because they thought such things made men soft and took the edge off their courage” (*B Gall.* 2.15, transl. Handford & Gardner), and the Suebi, who “absolutely forbid the importation of wine, because they think that it makes men soft and incapable of enduring hard toil” (4.2, transl. Handford & Gardner). This image of the noble barbarian untempered by civilized vices was undoubtedly a slight on Caesar’s rivals in Rome, but it also served to enhance the prestige of his victories over such an alien and incomprehensible enemy.

In addition to Celtic alcohol consumption being used to a variety of Roman ends, it is also possible that wine may have been a political symbol for competing dynasties in southern Britain in the aftermath of Caesar’s campaigns in the region. Frere (1987, 31) has suggested that the images of barley on gold coins of the dynast Cunobelin (of the so-called Eastern Kingdom) signified native beer, and was designed as propaganda against the pro-Roman Verica (of the so-called Southern Kingdom), who used vine

leaves on his gold coinage. Whilst this interpretation is undoubtedly a possibility, the greater intensity of finds of Italian wine amphorae in Cunobelin's Eastern Kingdom (particularly in aristocratic graves), not to mention evidence for diplomatic contact with Rome (Creighton, 2000) would suggest that the use of such symbolism was for rhetorical purposes rather than reflecting any real situation. Indeed, Creighton's (2000) compelling study of British coinage in the period effectively reverses Frere's interpretation, regarding the barley and vine leaves as symbols of plenty that British obsides (aristocratic hostages taken by Caesar) would have encountered during their upbringing and education in Augustan Rome.

Whilst wine may not have been an overt symbol of pro-Roman sentiment, the role of imported beverages in Iron Age Britain should not be overestimated. Many archaeological accounts of the 1970s and 80s tended to glorify the importance of wine and other Roman imports in generating social complexity in the period (Haselgrove, 1982; Cunliffe, 1988), no doubt influenced by Strabo's accounts of imports and exports to Britain in the Augustan period, and the high archaeological visibility of such "petty wares" (Str. 4.5.3) in richly furnished burials such as Welwyn Garden City (Stead, 1967) and Lexden (Foster, 1986). In such "prestige goods" models, an elite class is typically seen as being able to maintain its aristocratic status by controlling access to imported commodities and supplying them to subordinates for use at important rites of passage (e.g. initiations, marriages, funerals, etc). However, it soon became apparent that the quantities of wine amphorae entering northern Gaul were insufficient to support an elite class (Haselgrove, 1996, 168–75), where imports massively exceeded the numbers entering Britain, so the concept of prestige goods fell out of fashion.

Instead of viewing wine as the root cause of social change in parts of late Iron Age Britain, the current orthodoxy regards the limited numbers of wine amphorae entering the region as symptomatic of wider changes in society (Hill, 2007). Indeed, analysis of pottery assemblages from southern Britain shows an increasing preoccupation with drinking from c. 60 BC, yet the size and widespread distribution of common drinking vessels such as pedestal jars and later butt-beakers suggests they were intended for the consumption of locally produced beer or mead as opposed to Italian wine (Hill, 2002; Pitts, 2005). Such changes coincided with the introduction of the potter's wheel and a wide range of new vessel forms closely influenced by those being produced in parts of northern Gaul, with a particular emphasis on drinking vessels at the beginning of the process. Hill (2002, 150) argued that the sudden proliferation of drinking vessels in southeast Britain in the mid-first century BC marks a significant change in the social function of alcohol consumption, a sphere of social practice with a considerable importance in earlier prehistory. Whereas some have speculated on the "types" of feasting taking place (Ralph, 2007), the precise role(s) that communal drinking fulfilled in late Iron Age society

remain unclear. The high prevalence of drinking accoutrements in funerary contexts relative to settlements (Hill, 2002; Pitts, 2008) certainly implies that alcohol consumption was an important dimension of aspects of ritual practice, not least in the construction of individual and group identities. Taken together with the available ecofactual evidence (Hill, 1995; van der Veen & Jones, 2007), these changes should be seen in the context of a society in which the consumption of food and drink was being increasingly used to create social distinctions. Against this backdrop, the inscribed barley ears on Cunobelin's coinage may have merely reflected the increased social importance of beer consumption in the region, which is likely to have fulfilled a similar social role to that of wine in the *symposion* and *convivium* (Pitts, 2005).

The Civilizing Process

Although Roman incorporation inevitably brought new foods and ways of eating to parts of northwest Europe, the extent to which such new foodways spread to “native” populations beyond the urban and villa-inhabiting sphere of provincial society has been an important topic in recent debates over Romanization and the nature of provincial identity.

A number of general changes can be noted in the nature of changing food consumption in the Iron Age to Roman transition in Britain. In terms of meat consumption, so-called “native” sites with pre-Roman origins have been distinguished in dietary terms from forts, towns, and villas through having higher proportions of sheep as opposed to cattle and pig (King, 1978, 1984, 1999a). During the Roman period cattle and pork consumption increases, yet rather than following the “Roman” model of central Italy, where pork was favored almost exclusively, the British evidence is more in keeping with eating habits in the Gallic and German provinces, leading to calls for Gallicization and militarization of diet instead of Romanization (King, 1978, 1984, 1999a, 1999b, 2001). Similarly, the Roman period marks a shift in the butchery of animals from using knives to cleavers, maximizing the amount of meat to be obtained from a carcass (Maltby, 1994, 1996, 2007; Cool, 2006, 89). As butchery practices became more intensive, the average sizes of cattle, horse, and poultry in the northwestern provinces on the whole increase following Roman conquest, in stark contrast to areas beyond the frontiers, where animal sizes largely remain constant (Albarella, Johnstone, & Vickers, 2008, 1843). Similarly, the ceramic evidence from Britain distinguishes “native” sites from their new Roman counterparts through a lower incidence of imports and fine tableware, although as the Roman period progressed tableware and other Roman-style ceramics typically became more common at settlements of indigenous origin (Willis, 1996; Evans, 2001, 2005; Pitts, 2008).

Whilst the evidence noted above seems to indicate a universal

“Romanization” of diet following Roman incorporation, such general broad-brush observations can often mask a myriad of more complex and diverse processes and practices taking place. In many instances, pre-Roman styles of consumption persisted well into the Roman period, offering further opportunities to examine so-called Celtic eating and drinking. One complicating factor is being able to distinguish local cultural choices from the broader material effects of the overarching imperial economy. For example, although Roman material culture associated with eating and drinking (e.g. pottery) may be increasingly prevalent following Roman annexation, it does not follow that such finds necessarily represent a deliberate consumer choice (as opposed to simply using what was available), or that they were always used in the appropriate “Roman” fashion (Pitts, 2008). Nevertheless, if an appropriately contextual approach to the evidence is taken, it is possible to identify some recurrent trends.

Closer inspection of the faunal and ceramic evidence in early Roman southeast Britain provides further light on the problems in distinguishing consumer choice from other factors influencing diet in post-conquest societies. In a detailed study of animal husbandry regimes at several late Iron Age to Roman sites in southeast Britain, Albarella, Johnstone, and Vickers (2008) noted a statistically significant increase in cattle size in the period immediately following the Roman conquest at the large indigenous site of Elms Farm, Essex. Such changes almost certainly required the importation of new genetic stock from elsewhere, and were accompanied by an intensification of butchery marks and the appearance of Roman butchery practices. Given the nature and timing of this change, the changes are likely to have represented the direct intervention of the Roman authorities rather than local impetus. In contrast, improvements in the size of other species at the site did not occur until several generations later in the second century AD, with such changes most likely to have resulted from a combination of selective local innovation and wider engagement with a more developed Romano-British economy.

Parallel research on patterns of pottery consumption at the same sites (Pitts, 2008) reveals similar trends. Whilst late Iron Age pottery assemblages in the region could be distinguished from their early Roman urban counterparts through high proportions of drinking vessels, within a generation of the conquest both locally produced and imported butt-beakers and related vessels had stopped being produced. From the late first century AD, pottery assemblages at continuing sites of indigenous origin (e.g. Elms Farm) were increasingly characterized by vessels of a more “urban” character (e.g. dishes and bowls and smaller cups and beakers) when compared with their immediately post-conquest counterparts. Although potentially suggesting a widespread shift towards Roman-style dining habits, the sudden widespread nature of such changes is more likely to have resulted from a top-down

change in the production of pottery. As with the sudden increase in cattle size at Elms Farm, this contemporary shift in pottery consumption was probably motivated by the need to provision fledgling Roman urban centers, rather than “native” consumer choice.

Although the effects of the state inevitably loom large in archaeological accounts of the development of early provincial agricultural regimes, indigenous foodways are still apparent. At Elms Farm, the site of rapid changes in animal production and pottery consumption in the mid to late first century AD, it was possible to isolate what appears to be a resurgence of late Iron Age style communal drinking at the end of the second century, in a series of pits containing unusually high proportions of drinking vessels, some of them seemingly curated from the first century AD (Pitts, 2007, 2008). Such changes were also noted elsewhere in the wider region, showing the persistence and renegotiation of local identity against a backdrop of more widespread change. Similarly, the southeastern late Iron Age trend of depositing cooking wares in ditches and drinking and dining wares in pits and wells continues for at least 200 years into the Roman period (Pitts, 2007), implying continuity in certain ritual aspects of local foodways for several generations, in spite of the assumed civilizing influence of Roman hegemony. Beyond the southeast more spectacular examples of the persistence of local traditions are available, not least the large Roman-period feasting deposit of over 100 animals (mostly cattle) in the ditch fill of an Iron Age chariot burial (Orton, 2007).

As evidence for continuity in local social practices and foodways becomes more apparent in Roman Britain, the social function of Roman food and associated material culture at settlements of pre-Roman origin is increasingly called into question. A good example of this is the mortarium, a type of grinding bowl of Continental origin introduced to Britain after the Roman conquest. Although typically seen as an indicator of Roman-style food preparation in Britain, the very high incidence of mortaria at a series of second-century AD rural sites in northern Britain has caused a rethink of the function of this vessel (Cool, 2004), especially considering that non-villa rural sites in Roman Britain are often characterized as the least Romanized in terms of their material culture. In all likelihood the northern mortaria in rural contexts were not being used to prepare Roman-style food, which has significant further ramifications for interpretations of the type elsewhere in Britain and the Roman empire.

Despite generic evidence for widespread change in foodways in Britain following Roman annexation, the results of detailed contextual studies are beginning to allow archaeologists to paint a different picture in which local practices of eating and drinking adjusted to the changing political and economic circumstances rather than being swept away completely. In some cases, this renegotiation was overt and explicit, as witnessed in instances of

ritual feasting. In other cases change meant subtle readjustments to everyday practices in order to integrate newly available foodstuffs and culinary technologies. Comparisons with other regions (King, 2001) demonstrate that, even where generic Romanizing changes are visible in food provision, these are qualitatively and quantitatively different from Roman food production regimes in other provinces, raising further hurdles for those wishing to retain the traditional terminology of Romanization.

Conclusions

In the past the issue of Celtic food has been needlessly compartmentalized according to the somewhat arbitrary disciplinary divisions of ancient history and archaeology, and further divisions of the latter into prehistoric, Classical, and provincial Roman archaeology, not to mention specialist subdisciplines relating to the various classes of material evidence. By integrating these approaches, a more robust yet diverse picture of foodways in the pre-Roman northwest is beginning to emerge, dispelling many of the myths and stereotypes held by specialists working in isolation. By taking a chronological perspective incorporating not only pre-Roman societies but also the provincial cultures that succeeded them, I have attempted to demonstrate the important contribution of the various Iron Age food cultures to those in the western Roman empire. In the example of Iron Age to early Roman Britain, not only is it possible to identify the emergence of differentiated cuisine before the conquest, but also the persistence of typically Iron Age food practices and habits well into the Roman period. Such patterns underline the importance of food consumption for understanding the effects of a wide range of social, cultural, economic, and political changes in the ancient world, not least their huge potential for further insights of this nature.

FURTHER READING

A great deal of relevant information on food and drink is embedded within larger synthetic accounts of Iron Age Europe, owing to the primacy of archaeological evidence in the study of this period. Here, Cunliffe's *The Ancient Celts* (1997) and *Iron Age Communities in Britain* (2005) in addition to the work of Wells (2001) provide excellent starting points, with Haselgrove & Moore (2007) offering several important articles dealing explicitly with food-related matters in pre-Roman northwest Europe. For an exercise in experimental archaeology, the Butser Farm experiment (Reynolds, 1979) provides many excellent insights into the role of food in everyday life. On the importance of alcohol consumption in the context of the Celtic political economy, the work of Dietler (1990) remains a tour de force, whereas Arnold (1999) provides further valuable perspective.

PART 5

Food and Religion/Great Food Cultures

CHAPTER 32

Sacrifice¹

Sarah Hitch

Defining Sacrifice

“Sacrifice” is the English term used to cover a range of activities employed by communities with respect to their gods. The term comes from the Latin phrase *sacrum facere*, “to make sacred,” but the single word in English covers a variety of Greek and Latin words used to refer to this process. The most frequently used Greek words originally meant “burn” (*thuein*), “cut the throat” (*sphagein*), and “make sacred” (*hiereuein*), although nouns and verbs derived from *thuein* became standard terms for sacrifices of animals followed by a celebratory feast by at least the Classical period. Roman sacrifice was often referred to as *sacrificare*, but also *litare* (from Greek *litê* “entreaty”) and *immolare*, a verb derived from the custom of sprinkling salted barley, *mola salsa*, over the victim. That Greeks and Romans had no single term for “sacrifice” encapsulates the complexity and diversity of ritual offerings to deities. In Classical studies, “sacrifice” usually refers to the consecration, slaughter, and distribution of meat from animals, although the ritual process included vegetable and liquid offerings as well. Any man could perform sacrifice anywhere at any time: the ritual was not limited to specialists, specific occasions, or sacred settings, but rather concepts of purity and ancestral customs regulating procedure recognized by the whole community. Women participated in sacrificial rituals in a variety of contexts, not least of which the numerous Greek priestesses presiding over sacrifices to the deity they serve, but the bloody work of killing the victim was performed by a man, often a professional butcher. In sanctuaries, the priest or priestess often had the right of sacrifice: individuals were instructed to bring their victims to the officiant, who would sacrifice on their behalf and to whom they were sometimes required to give portions of the victim. The inscriptions that attest to this procedure do not give any practical details about how the individuals, officiant, and potential assistants such as butchers interacted, but the overall picture points to recognition of the cult official as responsible for rituals performed in the sanctuaries under their control.

There were many types of and occasions for sacrifice in the ancient world, for individual experiences of birth, marriage, and death, political rituals before any major undertaking, such as battle, in the foundations of cities, to sanctify treaties and oaths, and the numerous recurring festivals hosted by cities or other organized groups, in honor of deities. No single definition or category can encompass such a broad variety of rites, but an essential and consistent

feature is food: all “sacrifices” were potentially edible, and although some sacrificial victims were not eaten by the participants by far and away the most frequently attested offering is the so-called *thusia* (Roman *sacrificium*), an animal slaughtered over an altar, dismembered, cooked, and eaten.

“Sacrifice,” in the Greco-Roman context, describes the treatment of animals, vegetables, and fruit products. Sacrificial calendars observed by Greek cities follow the agricultural year, from which sacrifices often take their names, and many sacrifices commemorate aspects of the demanding work of agriculture. As a discussion of sacrifice as a food for gods and mortals, we will focus on the relatively abundant Greek depictions of sacrificial feasting that have given rise to the inexorable connection between sacrifice and eating in the predominant theoretical interpretations. Roman sacrifice, like Greek, was usually followed by a feast, but the sources do not attach the same importance to feasting as Greek sources.

There are two parties dining on sacrificial offerings, the gods and the mortals, who are usually presented with different portions of the same sacrificial meal. For gods, portions of the animal and vegetable offerings are either entirely burnt or presented, raw or cooked, on special offering tables (*trapeza*). Divine offerings come before the meat is cooked for consumption by the mortal worshippers, but the specifics of both portions are varied and complex. Typologies of sacrifice based on distinctions between offerings (animals or vegetables), method of killing (slaughtered with a knife, burned, buried, drowned), or deities (Olympian and Chthonian) have not been able to accommodate the flexibility and diversity of a polytheistic religion without canonical texts or an expert class of priests. A broad distinction that can be drawn is between routine sacrifices regulated by cities, such as those offered in annual festivals, and sacrifices performed in a more or less *ad hoc* fashion by individuals. Such a division is useful with regards to feasting, since private sacrifices generally consisted of a small number of people, usually members of the sacrificer’s household, participating in more or less equal measure, while those financed and organized by cities, “public” sacrifices, often demonstrate a highly regulated and hierarchical distribution of meat according to varying levels of participation in the ritual. With reference to Athens, these sacrifices form part of a complex system of “polis religion,” like the “civic cult” expressed in the official Roman religious calendar (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1990; Beard, North, & Price, 1998, 1–18). In these official contexts, sacrificial practice is highly regulated, both as an expression of communal devotion to gods and because of the ways social make-up is reaffirmed and made manifest in sacrifices at festivals. Looking at examples from both private and public sacrifices, we will focus on the evidence for distribution of food offerings to gods and sacrificial meat for mortal participants and the two predominant theoretical models derived therefrom: the interpretation of the ritual as a “communion” between gods and men and the more secularized theory of social integration through feasting.

Greek and Roman religious practices were not based on or derived from canonical, authoritative texts; sacrificial rituals are already “traditional” in our earliest sources and various searches for origins have been proposed by scholars without much consensus. We can reconstruct sacrificial practice from descriptions in literary sources, images on vases and votive reliefs, inscriptions, and archaeological remains, but these sources focus differently on different aspects; since none of our sources were intended to inform about the rituals *per se*, scholars now favor a coordinated, diachronic approach in reconstructions of the ritual, using a range of archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, and literary sources.

The Ritual Process

Small offerings made very frequently in Greek and Roman households were the basic experience of sacrifice. Even on festival days, some individuals participate in sacrifices organized by the city, while others sacrifice at home: after watching the inaugural procession for Bendis, Socrates and his friends go to the home of Cephalus, who is still wearing the customary wreath from the sacrifices he performed in his courtyard (Pl. *R.* 328c; cf. Isae. 8.16). Outside of sacrifices performed at home, individual sacrifices at sanctuaries for personal reasons are widely attested in inscribed dedications and votive reliefs. A vivid picture of the form the sacrificial process might take in a private setting is given in Aristophanes’ *Peace* (919–1120). Trygaeus, the farmer hero of the play, prepares for sacrifice by acquiring the sacrificial victim, a sheep, and several items that are consistently represented in ancient sources as the essentials for sacrificial practice: an altar, on which a fire is made, a basket (*kanoun*) with barley grains, a decorative ribbon for the animal (*stemma*), the sacrificial knife (*machaira*), and a jug (*chernips*) of water. Trygaeus and his slave circle the altar to the right and sprinkle water on it, before washing their hands, taking a piece of firewood, and sprinkling water on the altar, victim, and participants (lines 947–70). Hand washing before sacrifice is widely attested, a small indicator of the notion that only people “pure” in a ritual sense should approach the gods. Such a generally acknowledged code of practice can be detected in numerous references to religious offenses in Athenian orators and the fines and other punishments stipulated throughout the corpus of sacred laws (see Naiden, 2013). After the water rituals, barley grains are taken from the *kanoun* and scattered, probably over the altar, a consistent part of ancient Greek sacrifice of unknown origin and contested significance. Trygaeus is the “sacrificer,” the leader of the process, although most of the work is done at his instruction by the slave, including the slaughter of the victim. The sacrificer at private sacrifices is distinguished in three important ways: he pays for or himself provides the sacrificial victim and other foods; he makes the prayer communicating the request to the deity; third, he oversees the ritual process by beginning the

ceremony with a range of symbolic actions and concluding the ceremony through supervision of the allotment of meat. Trygaeus makes a prayer beginning, “O most reverend sovereign goddess, Lady Peace, accept our sacrifice,” (lines 974–7), followed by a long list of requests appropriate to the play’s celebration of the “Peace of Nicias,” concluding, “all this, O most highly-honoured one, grant to us as we pray” (line 1016). Such a notion of reciprocal exchange is ubiquitously attested in extant prayers and inscribed temple dedications: the sacrificer offers the god a gift to accompany a request as expressed in the prayer, or to thank the god for granting a prior request. The link between the material offering of an animal victim and divine favor bothered at least some ancient writers and has only received due attention in scholarship relatively recently (e.g. Pl. *Lg.* 909b–910b, Lucian *Sacr.* 2; Parker, 1998; Naiden, 2013). The notional divine acceptance of gifts was discomforting on some levels, since it *a priori* implies that divine favor is both conditional and subjective, but, despite occasional anxieties such as those expressed by Plato, seems to have been the purpose of sacrificial ritual.

After he has concluded the prayer with the request for the goddess to grant their wishes, Trygaeus tells his slave to “take up the sacrificial knife and slaughter the sheep like a *mageiros*” (lines 1016–18). Such a professional butcher, whose name is derived from the term for the sacrificial knife (*machaira*, Roman *cultarius* from the sacrificial knife, *culter*), was commonly employed to handle the preparations for the ceremony as well as the practicalities of killing and cooking the animal. Smaller victims’ throats were slit over the altar, while the blood of animals too large to lift into this position was collected in a special bowl (*sphageion*) and reserved to make sausages and the like (Ekroth, 2002, 242–51).

Unfortunately, we lack a detailed description of Roman sacrifice in any one source until the comparison of Roman and Greek practices by the Greek writer Dionysius of Halicarnassus under the reign of Augustus (Dion. Hal. 7.72.14–18). The Roman procedure can be reconstructed from a range of sources and seems to have been broadly similar to the Greek process. Similar preliminary rites began the ceremony: a procession (*pompa*) to an altar where the “sacrificer,” either the *paterfamilias* for private sacrifices or a priest or magistrate for public offerings, performed offerings of wine, incense, and the sprinkling of the victim with *mola salsa* to begin the ceremony. Roman citizens covered their heads with their togas; sacrificing with head uncovered was considered to be part of the “Greek rite.” The “Greek rite” was performed on certain public occasions and closely followed the format depicted in Trygaeus’ sacrifice, plus the cutting of hairs from the victim’s forehead to initiate the process, which Trygaeus does not do but is attested in other Greek sources as well (Scheid, 2007a). As in Greek practice, music was an essential accompaniment to all Roman sacrifices, usually provided by a flute player. The chief official makes the prayer after the preliminary offerings have been

made, followed by the slaughter of the victims by slaves and inspection of the entrails. Roman sources attest to a more explicitly reciprocal relationship between the offering of a sacrifice and divine beneficence in the practice of public vows (*vota*), such as the vow in 217 BC of sacrifices to Jupiter on the specific condition that the Romans survive their war against the Carthaginians and Gauls for the next five years (Price, 2004). On this condition, all the animals born between the Calends of March and May, called the “sacred Spring,” would be sacrificed according to a list of stipulations as to time, place, and sacrificer. Livy follows his quotation of this public vow voted into effect by the Roman people with a more general description of vows for games and large-scale sacrifices for Juppiter, as well as the performance, over a period of three days, of the *lectisternium* for the 12 Olympian gods, the ritual spreading of divine dining couches, which we will discuss more fully below. The sacrifice of the animals born in the “sacred Spring” was performed 21 years later in 195 BC, the process referred to by Romans as “releasing” the vow (*vota solvere*); in this case, the sacrifice had to be performed again in the following year due to a perceived error in the ritual, at which point it was also accompanied by the avowed games (Liv. 22.9.10–10.8, 33.44.1–2; 34.44). This exact attention to detail in Roman sacrifice, causing repetition of the ritual until perceptibly flawless, is not attested for Greek sacrifices and is an interesting reflection of different belief systems in the efficacy of sacrifice, even if the ritual procedure is superficially similar.

An Animal Divided

Before they gather the ritual implements for the sacrifice, Trygaeus and his slave ponder various types of offering before settling on a sheep (lines 923–37). Although the comic context invites such light-hearted banter, a more serious observation can be made about the relative freedom Greek worshippers had in this regard. Not all “sacrifices” were animal victims, although they form the most frequent class of offerings in extant sources. The color, age, sex, and condition of victims is sometimes specified in epigraphic sources for sacrifices funded by organized groups or cities, the so-called “sacred laws,” but does not adhere to any easily identifiable logic other than a generally observed homogeneity of gender: male victims for gods and female victims for goddesses. Certain cults required special animals, such as doves sacrificed for Aphrodite, or other specific details (black, pregnant, castrated, etc.), but on the whole all gods are offered the range of smaller and easily acquired domestic animals: pigs, goats, and sheep. Judging by the frequency with which sheep are depicted on votive reliefs, individuals cannot afford to dispense with an animal as expensive as a cow, although cities did sacrifice cattle on special occasions (van Straten, 1995, 171–86). At any rate, most gods were not perceived as picky about the species of their victims, but rather

the beautiful condition of the beast: multiple sources attest to various processes of selecting the most beautiful animals for public sacrifices. In general references to sacrifice in literature, such as the passage in Plato referenced above, specific details about the victim, even the species, are rarely mentioned.

During the preliminary rites around the altar, Trygaeus tells the sacrificial victim, “shake yourself quickly” (line 960). The forced participation of the victim in the ceremony has been interpreted as an outward sign of innate anxiety about sacrificial violence, one of the central tenants of the work of the German scholar Walter Burkert. Expanding the work of earlier German and Swiss scholars, Burkert proposed that sacrificial rituals were the central act in Greek religion because of the importance of violent, communal butchering in the maintenance of social structures. Burkert extensively explores the emotional drive to kill an animal and the act’s emotional impact as forms of tension control within groups or as outlets for innate aggression (Burkert, 1983, 1985). His emphasis on “the kill” is not supported by the majority of ancient testimony on sacrifice, which generally depict sacrificial feasting as a happy, celebratory occasion (Peirce (1993)). However, his emphasis on the visibility of the performance of sacrifice, the distinctive roles played by the participants according to their status in the community, and the power of sacrifice as an occasion for social bonding is very useful.

While scholars no longer consider sacrificial violence as the key to understanding Greek practice and its central social importance, sacrificial violence was a focal point for ancient writers on Roman political strife during the late Republic, as well as for much later Christian writers reflecting on Roman practices. For example, several ancient sources describe the murder of Tiberius Gracchus by the pontifex maximus, Nasica, in 133 BC in terms of a sacrifice, as does Cassius Dio recording Caesar’s execution of mutineers in 46 BC (Várhelyi, 2011, 126–7; Dio Cass. 43.24.4); there are some late sources attesting to sacrifices of Greeks and Gauls in this same period (Plu. *Quaest. Rom.* 83). The stronger connections drawn between politics and religion from the time of the late Republic through the late empire at least superficially manifest themselves in changing perceptions of and shifting emphases on sacrifice, an interesting and broad-ranging topic beyond the scope of our focus on food.

Trygaeus sends his slave offstage to slaughter the sheep, telling him to “cut out the thigh-bones” (lines 1021–2). While the slave does this, Trygaeus arranges the firewood “like a *mantis*” (line 1026), probably a reference to the practice of watching smoke from the altar fire for signs of divine acceptance, a practice indicative of the presence of the silent party to every sacrifice, the gods. On the fire are first burnt the divine portions before the offal are grilled and eaten, followed by distribution of the rest of the animal. Divine portions vary in extant sources: in *Peace*, the thigh bones, *osphus*, and tail are burnt

entirely for the goddess. Thigh bones seem to have been the essential gift, going back at least to the time of Homer: heroes and gods often summarize the entire process of sacrifice by saying “I burned the thigh bones for the gods” (e.g. *Od.* 3.179). Bone deposits in sanctuaries confirm the epic picture: for example, at the temple of Apollo Daphnephoros at Eretria, 93% of the bone deposits from the sacrificial altar are thigh bones, along with some tail bones and kneecaps (Ekroth, forthcoming). The *osphus*, first attested as part of the god’s portion in Aeschylus, is probably the bone structure attaching the tail to the spine, the so-called *sacrum*, “sacred bone,” although the evidence for the definition of this term is somewhat inconsistent (Aesch. *Pr.* 493–9; van Straten, 1995, 129). Offerings of tails in different poses seem to be depicted in a few vase paintings; it seems that the tail was burned to interpret divine favor due to the different appearances it may take during burning (van Straten, 1995, 118–44). The divinatory uses of parts of the animal are well attested for Roman sacrifices, the success of which depended on an examination of the entrails, *exta*: liver, lungs, heart, and caul, which were then offered to the deity in various ways, sometimes accompanied by offerings of meat and other foods (see, e.g., Var. *L.* 5.112; Beard, North, & Price, 1998, 148–65).

While Trygaeus burns the thigh and tail bones, the slave prepares the offal (*splanchna*) and *thulemata*, probably barley grains mixed with wine and oil, which were sprinkled over the burning offerings. The *splanchna* are the heart, lungs, liver, spleen, and kidney (Arist. *MA* 665a28), which were cooked on spits while the divine portions burned. In addition to the innards, the tongue of Trygaeus’ victim is also cut out separately from the rest of the victim and roasted. Once these special parts have roasted, Trygaeus pours libations of wine with a little prayer to conclude this part of the ceremony (lines 1106–8). These innards are the most honorific portion of the sacrificial meat, usually allotted to the sacrificer and immediate participants in this stage of the sacrifice, and some sources record that a portion of the *splanchna* is given to the god. In this scene, Trygaeus and the slave fight off the advances of a certain Hierocles, who wants a portion of the innards and the tongue, which he claims for himself by virtue of his role as a purveyor of oracles for Athens. The regulated allotment of honorary portions of the victims to certain professionals and representatives of the city during sacrifices funded from the public purse is at the heart of this joke; it is within the power of the sacrificer, who has provided the funds for the ceremony, to control this all important aspect of distribution. So, the sacrificial ritual in *Peace* concludes when Trygaeus invites the audience of the play to join him in this sacred allotment: *susplancheneute* “eat the *splanchna* with us” (line 1115). The sacrificial ceremony in *Peace* tails off after the *splanchna* are consumed; at this point in most sacrifices, the rest of the animal is distributed among participants as either raw meat to take home or boiled portions to be eaten as a group. One Homeric term used of sacrificial feasting, *dais*, comes from a verb *daioimai* meaning “divide”: in essence, the sacrificial feast is a division.

Food for Gods

Explicit descriptions of the divine portions at sacrifices are rare, inconsistent, and mostly confined to myth, stories of a bygone era when mortals and gods interacted. Even in these contexts, descriptions of gods attending sacrifices and eating offerings are non-existent, a startling silence given the seemingly ubiquitous belief in divine presence in sanctuaries. Although vase painting and votive reliefs often depict the god standing near the altar, they never depict any kind of consumption or direct contact with the sacrificial victim. The typical image is of people standing to one side of the altar with an animal, while the deity stands on the other side: the altar in these images acts as a physical and metaphorical barrier. Trygaeus prays for Peace to “receive her offering” and such sentiments are often attested, but the invitation to “receive” is not the same as an invitation to join the feast. There are sporadic attestations to the divine reception of sacrificial smoke (*knise*); the idea that the gods somehow consume the smoke as nourishment forms the plot of Aristophanes’ outrageous comedy *Birds*, but there is not much testimony to this aspect of sacrifice outside of comedy and a few ambiguous references in Homer (*Il.* 1.66, 317, 8.549, *Od.* 10.10, 12.36, 17.270). Early epic presents a dim picture of bygone times, such as the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and mystical locations, such as the Aithiopes and Phaeacians, where mortals and immortals share meals, but the overall picture is one of distance (Hom. *Il.* 1.423–5, 23.205–7, 24.62–3; *Od.* 1.25–6, 7.201–6). Hesiod gives a somewhat cryptic story about offerings of bones arising from the segregation of mortals and immortals (Hes. *Th.* 507–616). The divine portion of bones is the result of Prometheus’ attempt to trick Zeus at a time when mortals and immortals were dividing up an ox, presumably to share as a meal, but like the general silence of Homer on shared meals between gods and men this is not made explicit. Hesiod’s myth has provoked much commentary, since the divine portion of bones is negatively cast in terms of deception and leads Zeus to punish mortals by withholding fire and creating women, expanded in the *Works and Days* to include the laborious task of agriculture (Hes. *Op.* 42–105). The highly influential structuralist interpretation of Jean-Pierre Vernant points out the role of sacrifice in the creation of a cosmic hierarchy based on food consumption: gods, mortals, and animals are distinguished in a descending hierarchy exemplified in the human need for sustenance via cooked animals and procreation (Vernant, 1989). We may add that Zeus’ anger provides a divine model for the accuracy needed for and importance in the division of meat; it is one example of a pattern in early Greek myth about quarrels over sacrificial meat, most vividly exemplified in the murder of Achilles’ son, Neoptolemus, at a sacrifice at Delphi (Pind. *N.* 7.34–47). The sinister potential for contentious divisions of sacrificial meat in some myths is given a humorous twist in Attic comedy through numerous jokes about the meager

offering presented to gods or the mean spirit in which hungry people make such an allotment (e.g. *Men. Dys.* 451–3; *Sam.* 184–7).

Trygaeus began his sacrificial ceremony with a joke about the appetite of the goddess Peace: “She won’t want bread or barley cake, she’s used to licking ambrosia up there alongside the gods” (lines 853–5). Gods feast on ambrosia and nectar in Homer, Hesiod, and the Homeric Hymns (e.g. *Hom. Od.* 92–5), a notion of special divine foods that is never reconciled with the gifts of animal sacrifice prevalent throughout these same texts. Further, Homer defines immortality as an abstinence from food and wine; conversely, eating, along with death, is the defining characteristic of mortality (*Il.* 5.341–2, 21.462–7 ff.). How sacrificial offerings fit with this conception of divinity, or the existence of special divine foods, is a strange paradox at the heart of Greek mythology. The relevance of myths to ritual practice is an old and inconclusive question, which is often left with the observation that, whatever the conception in myth, daily offerings of food to gods through sacrifice and offering tables are ubiquitously attested.

Communion with Gods

Professional study of sacrificial ritual began in the Victorian era in the works of a handful of scholars in England and France who were either pioneers in the creation of anthropology as a discipline or heavily influenced by those who were. In these contexts of cross-cultural comparisons and concepts of cultural acceleration, sacrificial rituals in many “primitive” cultures were thought to center around the sacrificial victim, who was somehow a manifestation of the deity, as either a “totem” or a substitute for former human sacrifices. In these views, mortal participants shared in the divine through consumption of the totem and this emphasis on shared eating, with various permutations, has underwritten interpretation of the social significance of the ritual for over a century (see essays collected by Carter, 2003). Scholars no longer view sacrificial victims in terms of “totems,” but even a more moderate interpretation of the victim as a mediator between man and god does not particularly suit Greek sacrifice for many of the reasons outlined above. The few meditations on sacrifice before the Christian era define it as a gift to gods without reference to a meal or even a shared experience with the gods (e.g. *Pl. Euthd.* 14c). However, recent emphasis on bone deposits in sanctuaries and the epigraphic testimony for food offerings has resurrected the communion interpretation (see, e.g., Parker, 2011). For example, bone deposits from the altar in the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia show a range of animal bones burned for the god, which might indicate a larger presentation of food (Ekroth, forthcoming). Inscriptions reveal the efforts and cost of adorning offering tables (*trapeza*) in a variety of cults in several different cities (Gill, 1974). Significantly, as opposed to the inedible offering of bones burned for gods, these ceremonies presented the very same foods as eaten by the mortals

themselves. Athenaeus (4.137e) describes the offerings of cheese, barley cake, ripe olives, and leeks set out on a *trapeza* for the Dioskouroi (Castor and Pollux) in the Athenian *prytaneum*. When these offering tables figured in festivals, the custom was referred to as *theoxenia*, “hospitality for gods,” or *theodaisia*, “feast for gods.” A nice example of an offering of bones along with other food comes in a fifth-century inscription from Selinous in southern Sicily. Addressing future worshippers, the law prescribes the following offerings for a local cult, the “Tritopatores,” and for Zeus, worshipped here as “Meilichios,” a cult title found in several cities: “Pouring down a libation of honey mixture, let him set out both a table and a couch, and let him put on them a pure cloth and crowns of olive and honey mixture in new cups and cakes and meat; and having made offerings let them burn them To Zeus Meilichios ... let them sacrifice a ram ... Let him take out the public (sacred objects) and put out a table before them, and burn a thigh and the offerings from the table and the bones. Let no meat be carried out of the precinct” (adapted from Jameson, Jordan, & Kotansky, 1993, 15 and commentary). Zeus’ table contents are burned along with thigh and other bones, possibly the rest of the ram’s skeleton. The prohibition on the removal of meat is found in several sacred laws and implies that all meat from the victims must be consumed in the sanctuary, further reinforcing a notion of commensality with gods.

Presentations of food to deities formed a central part of Roman rituals as well. In one of the earliest sources for Roman sacrifice, Cato the elder describes a *daps* “feast” of roasted meat and wine for Juppiter *Dapalis* “of the feast” (Cato Agr. 132). Other sources attest to the use of dining couches for divine statues in rituals called the *epulum Iovis* “feast of Jove” and the *lectisternium* “couch spreading.” The “feast of Jove” was celebrated at both the “Plebian” and “Roman” games and seems to have involved the placement of statues of Jove, Juno, and Minerva on two different couches according to gender (Liv. 30.39.8; V. Max. 2.1.2). Livy gives some details of the initial celebration of the *lectisternium*: after consultation of the Sibylline books in response to bad weather in 399 BC, three couches were decorated for Apollo, Latona, Diana, Hercules, Mercury, and Neptune (5.13.5–8).

We can conclude this section with a brief mention of sporadically attested complaints about the suitability of animals as sacrificial offerings, usually in anecdotes about the sixth-century philosopher Pythagoras and his adherents. The evidence is inconsistent, but circles around an idea found in Greek and Roman sources of original offerings of fruit and naturally occurring foods reflective of a “golden age” in which gods provided food for mortals without the efforts of agriculture; the practice was corrupted by animal sacrifice, seen as a mistake incompatible with divine commensality (e.g. Plu. *Conv. Sept. Sap.* 158a; Porph. *Abst.* 2.9–10; Ov. *Met.* 15.60–142).

Food for Mortals

While Trygaeus and his slave set about getting together the necessary preparations for their sacrifice, the Chorus of the play urge them to be quick so that a notorious flute-player cannot interrupt and lay claim to some of the sacrificial meat (lines 950–5), one of several jokes about the distribution of the animal illustrative of the Greek preoccupation with the meat meal following *thusia* sacrifices. Most Athenians at the time this play was produced in 421 BC ate primarily bread, vegetables, fruit, cheese, and fish; sacrifices are probably the only occasions on which Athenians ate meat. A small sheep cost approximately 10 drachma, the same amount of money given to soldiers in the mid-fourth century to purchase a month's food supply (Dem. 4.28; Rosivach, 1994, 100ff.). Inscribed sacrificial calendars indicate that the Athenian *polis* or the subgroups of demes, tribes, and other officially organized kinship groups performed sacrifices on approximately 40 occasions per year, or once every 8–9 days (Rosivach, 1994, 66). The luxury of eating meat may have emphasized this aspect of sacrifice in ancient accounts, where it is sometimes presented as a form of wealth redistribution (e.g. [X.] *Ath.* 2.9).

As an example of one of these public sacrifices, we can look to a lengthy fourth-century decree stipulating the division of sacrificial meat at the “Little Panathenaia,” the annual festival held in the intervening years between the “Great Panathenaia” (IG II² 334, Rhodes & Osborne, 2003, 81). Like so many sacred laws, the document is concerned with public expenditure for sacrifices, both for accounting purposes and for general confidence in the accomplishment of traditional rites on behalf of the community. This law is prompted by a new source of public funding, which will be made available to the annually elected *hieropoioi*, “performers of rites,” to make two sacrifices during the festival. The mixture of public and sacred officials responsible for managing these festivals is physically enacted through the distribution of meat: the law decrees that the *hieropoioi* give five portions of meat to the *prytaneis*, three portions to the archons, generals, and taxiarchs, and single portions to the “Treasurers of Athena” and the *hieropoioi* themselves. The “usual portions,” the law continues, should be distributed to the Athenians who participated in the procession and the girls carrying the sacrificial baskets, *kanephoroi*, “bearers of the *kanoun*”; the remainder of the meat is apportioned out to “the Athenians” (col.B l.5–15). We don't know what amount is implied by the “usual portions” given to the processionalists, but it is worth noting how they are included in the first tier of the hierarchical meat division, along with the city's leaders. This first tier comprises 99 different magistrates; the practical ramifications of this are probably reflected in the specified payment for butchers at the end of the decree, along with expenses for the procession and decoration of the altar (l.27–35). The sacrifices thus divided are of unspecified number and type of victims: this part of the inscription is entirely concerned with finances and meat distribution. A few

more ritual details are given in the subsequent description of a second set of sacrifices. 41 minas are provided for the purchase of cows, which are to be sacrificed on the “great altar of Athena” after the procession; the *hieropoioi* are to choose the most beautiful cow and sacrifice it separately on the altar of Athena Nike. The sacrificial meat from both sacrifices is to be distributed to “the Athenians” by deme, proportionate to their participation in the procession (1.16–26). 41 minas would have purchased approximately 50 cows, about half the number sacrificed at the “Greater Panathenaia,” providing up to 6000 kilograms of meat (Rhodes & Osborne, 2003, 401), a vivid example of the way public sacrifices were used to demonstrate the wealth and power of the host city.

In the first sacrifice, the distribution of sacrificial meat is regulated by the city in a method intended to reflect social hierarchy: the city’s leaders receive special portions of sacrificial meat, and festival participants are likewise honored, assimilating their status on these occasions to that of generals, archons, and prytaneis, although the ranking is made clear in lesser portions. In the second sacrifice, all the citizens get meat from the sacrifices: the ritual forms a practical function of meat distribution and an occasion for social bonding. Both the hierarchical division of meat among officials and the distribution of meat to all citizens are seen to exemplify the fundamental role of sacrificial feasting in ancient cities in the highly influential work of Marcel Detienne, a prominent representative of the so-called “Paris School” of scholars working on Greek myth and religion in Paris during the late twentieth century. With reference to distribution of sacrificial meat on a large scale to citizens on Cos, he concludes “the portion eaten by each of the guests consecrates, in alimentary and sacrificial order, his share of political rights that arise from his belonging to the circle of citizens and having in principle the same rights of speech and the exercise of power as the others ... dietary practices reflect the political texture of the sacrifice as well as the type of social relationships involved therein” (Detienne, 1989, 13). This model depends on an inextricable connection between meat eating and sacrifice: “the first characteristic that justifies the central place of the blood sacrifice in Greek social and religious thought: the absolute coincidence of meat-eating and sacrificial practice” (Detienne, 1989, 3). The importance of sacrifice for ancient Greeks is not so much a ceremony for gods but rather the way participation in sacrificial feasts reflects and reaffirms social order. The social significance of communal participation in sacrifices is widely attested, but not all sacrifices concluded with a shared meal in this way. In sanctuaries, bone deposits on sacrificial altars often differ from debris found elsewhere on the site, so-called “consumption debris,” since the fragmented treatment of the bones suggests butchery to prepare for consumption, as opposed to the highly carbonized remains of burned bones. For example, at the Artemesium at Ephesus, cattle, sheep, and goat remains were found at the altar, while the dinner debris included these species but also remains from pigs, horses, and

game (Ekroth, forthcoming). From this archaeological evidence, it seems that some animals were slaughtered at the altar in the method described in Aristophanes' *Peace*, with thigh bones removed and burned for the god, while other animals were brought in for slaughter for a meal without treatment on the altar or possibly even brought in already dead (such as the remains of wild game) to be cooked in the sanctuary. Since the evidence for horse sacrifices suggests that they were extremely rare and almost always entirely destroyed rather than sacrificed and eaten, the remains of horses and wild game point to a practice of bringing in other types of meat to fill out the sacrificial meal. In other words, everyone in attendance may have participated in the sacrifice in some way, but all participants did not eat the same food or even food from the sacrificial victims. Various Greek and Roman sources attest to the sale of sacrificial meat and occasions when sacrificial meat can be taken away from sanctuaries, again indicating that people might attend sacrifices but eat the meat from the sacrifice elsewhere. A more flexible interpretation is that sacrifice is an important sign of social harmony, but did not carry this significance only through the shared meal.

FURTHER READING

Samples of the most important theories on sacrifice can be found in the work of Carter (2003). For general discussions of Greek sacrifice, see Bremmer (1994, 2007), Burkert (1983, 1985), and Parker (2011). Some key sources for Roman sacrifice are given by Beard, North, & Price (1998); Price (2004) and Scheid (2007a) give a general overview. On sacrifice and the Roman emperor, see Gordon (1990) and Hekster *et al.* (2008). Comparative studies are given by Gilhus (2006), Petropoulou (2008), and Yerkes (1952).

The practicalities of sacrifice, including meat distribution and the sale of sacrificial meat, are treated by Jameson (1988), Rosivach (1994), and van Straten (1995).

On the question of divine food consumption and food offerings to gods, see Detienne & Sissa (2000), Gill (1974), and Jameson (1994). Ekroth (2002) provides an influential discussion of the range of sacrificial offerings other than the “*thusia*” type.

Rives (2011) discusses reactions to animal sacrifice in the Christian era; see also Obbink (1998). Detienne (1977a) interprets stories of original sacrifices associated with Pythagoras.

Reflections on sacrificial violence and theoretical interpretations can be found in the work of Gilhus (2006), Versnel (2011), and essays collected by Knust & Várhelyi (2011) and Faraone & Naiden (2012). Naiden (2013) is a full-length historical study on Greek sacrifice in most of its permutations with an overview of the history of scholarship. For sacrifice in literary mythology, especially Homer and Hesiod, see Henrichs (1981, 2012), Hitch (2009), Kirk

(1981), Seaford (2004), and Vernant (1989). An accessible introduction to Greek sacred laws is that by Lupu (2009).

NOTE

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CHAPTER 33

Jewish Meals in Antiquity

Jordan D. Rosenblum

Introduction

Following a trend in both popular and scholarly literature, food has become a hot topic amongst scholars of Judaism in antiquity. In particular, scholars have honed in on how Jews in antiquity used regulations concerning what, and with whom, to eat as a means of constructing their own identity (e.g. Freidenreich, 2011; Kraemer, 2009; Rosenblum, 2010a; Weiss, 2010). Thus, meals were used to establish and maintain borders between those with whom “we” eat (Us) and those with whom we do not eat (Them).

In this chapter, we will explore rabbinic meal practices. The rabbis, who flourished in Palestine and Babylon after the destruction of the Second Temple by Rome in 70 AD, often discuss what, with whom, and how one should eat. Judaism in antiquity was, much like today, quite diverse, including groups as varied as the early followers of Jesus and the separatist Qumran sect that composed and collected the Dead Sea Scrolls. While the rabbis do not represent the entire range of ancient Judaism, focusing on them offers two advantages. First, though they do not represent the majority of Jews in antiquity, their small movement slowly develops into normative Judaism. Today, “Judaism” is rabbinic Judaism. Second, they both conserve and innovate meal practices. Thus, the rabbis draw from their surrounding (Jewish and non-Jewish) milieus, while at the same time creating new customs. The rabbis’ dual roles as conservators and innovators allow us to set into relief how they use food and meal regulations to connect with their surrounding (Jewish and non-Jewish) world while simultaneously disconnecting from it.

We begin by asking four questions. First, what did Jews in late antiquity eat? Second, how did they obtain their food? Third, how did they prepare their food? Fourth, how did they eat their food? In answering these questions below, we will learn much about how the rabbis, and Jews in antiquity in general, used culinary (what one eats) and commensal (how one eats) regulations to construct their identity. Then we will be able to examine how Jews in antiquity explained why they ate the way they did.

What Did They Eat?

In order to reconstruct the diet of Jews in late antiquity, we must use a

combination of archaeological and textual data. While both bodies of evidence are not without their problems, taken together they allow us to view the general outlines of their diet (for sources and discussion, see Kraemer, 2010, 403–7; Rosenblum, 2010a, 17–22).

Bread was the staple food. However, man does not live on bread alone (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). Thus, bread was dipped in olive oil or served with olives or legumes in various forms. As is the case today, the variety, quality, and quantity of one's diet depended on one's financial resources. Meat consumption, for example, was more common amongst the rich than the poor, who often had to rely on legumes for their protein. Similarly to other residents of the ancient Mediterranean, Jews complemented their diet with various fruits and vegetables, nuts, dairy products, and fish. Water and wine were common beverages. On festival occasions, including the weekly Sabbath, more food was eaten and animal protein was more likely to be consumed (as implied in *t. Peah* 4:8). Finally, while the Hebrew Bible provides a series of regulations regarding edible and tabooed animals (see Lev. 11; Deut. 14), which the rabbis augment, it is unclear to what extent these rules were followed by the general population. (Much like today, these dietary regulations were probably followed by some and not others, and, among those who did follow them, the range of interpretation likely varied.)

How Did They Obtain Their Food?

The ubiquitous markets, which appeared on both a permanent and periodic basis, provided most of their food (Rosenfeld & Menirav, 2005). At these markets, Jew and non-Jew alike were able to purchase or barter for foodstuffs. Although both men and women went to the market, rabbinic literature evidences a discomfort with women doing so. Additional avenues for acquiring food included purchasing cooked food from an inn or hostel, trading informally, and growing or gathering food. Hunting was another means for people in the ancient Mediterranean to acquire meat, but rabbinic regulations regarding animal slaughter made this problematic for Jews.

How Did They Prepare Their Food?

While the lack of certain animal proteins from the Jewish diet was noticeable, especially pork (Rosenblum, 2010b), neither the general cooking methods nor *batterie de cuisine* (tools necessary for the cooking process) of late antique Jews remarkably distinguished them from their non-Jewish neighbors. However, the rabbis did institute a variety of specific food practices that would have affected food preparation among Jews who followed them.

First of all, the rabbis regulated the role that non-Jews could play in the cooking process. Food now required a Jewish cook in order to be considered “kosher” (meaning “fit” for consumption; see Rosenblum, 2010a, 75–90).

Second, an animal had to be slaughtered, and the resulting meat prepared, in a manner prescribed by rabbinic law. Here, the rabbis drew on biblical proscriptions, adding their own innovations (discussed below). Third, the rabbis interpreted the biblical prohibition against boiling a kid in its mother's milk (Exod. 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21) as referring to consuming *any* meat with *any* milk. The novelty of this interpretation is often missed, as they are the first group of Jews to read these biblical passages in this manner. (In the ensuing centuries, the application of this interpretation was developed much more broadly; in general, see Kraemer (2009), and discussion later). Finally, the rabbis instituted a variety of other food preparation processes. For example, the rabbis sought to control the preparation and consumption of wine, which they feared might have been (knowingly or unknowingly) offered as a libation to a pagan deity prior to Jewish consumption.

These food-preparation laws assured that the practice of turning raw ingredients into cooked food – from nature to culture, as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1975) has argued – served as a practice of distinction: between Jew and non-Jew, and between rabbinic Jew and non-rabbinic Jew. To offer one concrete example, let us return to rabbinic legislation regarding animal slaughter. The Hebrew Bible only mandates that, when slaughtering an animal, one pour its blood on the ground rather than consume it (Lev. 17:10–4; Deut. 12:15–27; 15:19–23). In a tractate devoted to non-cultic slaughter (*Hullin*), the rabbis spell out a myriad of rules, including regulations for how, when, with whom, and with what one may slaughter. While the details of rabbinic law regarding animal butchery and consumption are too complicated to explain here, the important point is that, according to the rabbis, “valid” animal slaughter required one to follow their innovative practices and rituals. And these practices and rituals served to differentiate both Jews from non-Jews and non-rabbinic Jews from other Jews.

How Did They Eat Their Food?

An excellent location to establish the borders of a community is at the borders of its tables; this cross-cultural observation held true for Jews in the ancient world. However, the rabbis did not completely ignore the meal customs of their wider Greek and Roman world. Like early Christians, they preserved the overall structure of meals in their broader environment but reinterpreted or changed the meanings of specific elements (on Christianity, see Smith, 2003; Taussig, 2009; and Smith's chapter in this volume). In order to examine this bricolage, let us look at an early rabbinic text that discusses the order of a meal:

What is the order of a meal? Guests enter, and they are seated on benches and on chairs until [all of the guests] are gathered [and seated]. [Once] all of them are gathered, [and the servants] have given them [water] for their

hands, every [guest] washes one hand. When [the attendants] have mixed for them the cup [of wine], each one recites the benediction [over wine] for himself. [When] they have brought before them appetizers, each one recites the benediction [over them] himself. [When] they have arisen [from the benches and/or chairs] and reclined [for the second course of the meal] and [the attendants] have [again] given them [water] for their hands, even though [each person] has [already] washed one hand, he [now] washes both hands. When [the attendants] have mixed for them the cup [of wine], even though [each person] has [already] recited a benediction over the first [cup], he recites the benediction over the second [cup, as well]. [When] they have brought before them desserts, even though [each person] has [already] recited a benediction over the first [appetizers], he recites the benediction over the second [ones, as well], and one [person] recites a benediction for all of them. One who arrives after three [courses of] appetizers [have been served] is not allowed to enter [and participate in the meal] (*t. Ber.* 4:8).

This meal would not seem very foreign to contemporary non-Jews living in the larger Greek and Roman world. It draws on symposium meal structure of the larger Greek and Roman milieu. Even its assumption of an elite, male guest list fits with the overall pattern.

However, it is important to note one important difference. The meal is punctuated by several benedictions. At these moments, diners must recite rabbinic formulae. Thus, this rabbinic table talk serves to distinguish the rabbinic meal (see Kraemer, 2009, 73–86; Rosenblum, 2010a, 98–101).

The meal described above is clearly an ideal meal. It assumes one has both the time to dine leisurely and the resources to afford a lavish meal and servants. It also assumes that the diners reclined (on rabbinic reclining, see Rosenblum, 2012). On a daily basis, especially for those of lesser financial means, meals were much simpler. Although the formal structure, dining posture, and *haute cuisine* might be lacking, one key element remained: those who adhered to rabbinic mores would recite the prescribed benedictions before and after consuming certain foods. At these moments, rabbinic table talk would differentiate the rabbinic meal from that of both the non-rabbinic Jew and the non-Jew.

While various lifecycle meals had Greek and Roman cognates (e.g. wedding and funeral banquets), some rabbinic meals were without precise parallels: those that pertained to Jewish festivals. Some of these festival meals occurred every week (the Sabbath meals) while others occurred once a year (for example, meals consumed in a booth (*sukkah*) for the festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles), which occurs every fall) (on Sabbath and Sukkot meals in early rabbinic literature, see Rosenblum, 2010a, 170–8). The most discussed Jewish festival meal in antiquity is the Passover *seder* (see, e.g., Brumberg-Kraus,

2005, 300–2; Kraemer, 2010, 414–5; Rosenblum, 2010a, 63–8, 128–30, 162–70). The Passover *seder* ritually reenacts and reinterprets the mythical exodus from Egypt by the Israelites. Drawn from a variety of rabbinic sources, this meal is thoroughly rabbinic. Yet, the structure of this most rabbinic meal is clearly indebted to that of the Greek and Roman symposium (see previous note for sources). Thus, while the rabbis construct meal practices that enact and maintain Jewish identity, they are still very much influenced by their surrounding environment.

The rabbinic meal is both distinctly rabbinic and distinctly ancient Mediterranean. On the one hand, drawing on Jewish tradition and innovative interpretation, the rabbinic meal appears to part of the emerging rabbinic culture. On the other hand, drawing on the overall structure of the symposium, the rabbinic meal appears very much a part of the Greek and Roman culture of the ancient Mediterranean.

Defending the Distinct Diet of the Ancient Jew

While the previous section was by no means exhaustive, a trend has emerged: in many ways, “Jewish” food – as well as the way it was obtained, prepared, and eaten – did not differ drastically from that of the non-Jews. Yet, food still served to distinguish rabbinic Jews from non-rabbinic Jews and non-Jews. In this section, we will discuss how Jews in antiquity defended their unique cuisine.

While Jews ate much of the same food as their Mediterranean peers, they had their own dietary taboos, some of which have been discussed above. However, the practice of food aversions in general is not unique to Jews, either in the ancient world (see Beer, 2010) or cross-culturally, as every known culture taboos food that is otherwise edible. Yet, Jews in antiquity often felt compelled to defend their distinct foodways. It is in this defense of food that we learn much about how these ancient Jews understood themselves and their surrounding world.

The Hebrew Bible does not provide much of a rationale for following the dietary regulations prescribed therein. Besides invoking the need to be a holy people (see Lev. 11:44–5), the biblical laws are to be followed simply because they are divine fiat. These rules have thus cried out for interpretation, from both ancient and modern interpreters (especially anthropologists; in general, see Kraemer, 2009, 9–24). Later on, the rabbis will divide biblical legislation into two types: *mishpatim* (commandments with a basis in logic) and *hukim* (commandments that, while illogical, must still be followed); the food laws are considered *hukim*, and must be followed despite their lack of explicit rationale and even rationality (see *b. Yoma* 67b). This later stance did not prevent ancient Jews from seeking to comprehend the logic of the biblical food laws. In fact, this stance did not even prevent rabbinic Jews – from

ancient to modern times – from offering their own explanations.

In the Second Temple period (ca. 515 BC–70 AD), the notion of food as a means of social separation between Jews and others developed. This idea may have influenced biblical legislation; however, aside from the late book of Daniel, we only explicitly encounter this conception in non-canonical Second Temple-period texts (in general, see Kraemer, 2009, 25–37; Rosenblum, 2010a, 36–45). For example, according to the *Letter of Aristeas* (ca. second century BC),

In his wisdom the legislator [Moses], in a comprehensive survey of each particular part, and being endowed by God for the knowledge of universal truths, *surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter*, being thus kept pure in body and soul, preserved from false beliefs, and worshipping the only God omnipotent over all creation.... *So to prevent our being perverted by contact with others or by mixing with bad influences, he hedged us in on all sides with strict observances connected with meat and drink and touch and hearing and sight, after the manner of the Law*

(139, 142; transl. Shutt, 1985, 22, emphasis added).

As stated in the *Letter of Aristeas*, biblical food rules prevent one from mixing with bad influences. For the author of *Aristeas*, this separation is a positive thing. When later Greek and Roman authors notice this, however, they are much less sanguine about the subject, as they believe this separation at the table to be indicative of a larger misanthropy on the part of ancient Jews (for references, see Rosenblum, 2010a, 43–4).

However, the biblical food laws were also seen as more than just a means of social separation. They were also a means of instruction. Thus, we find later in the *Letter of Aristeas* that the biblical requirement to consume ruminant animals is intended to teach a lesson: one must learn from those who ruminate on food that we ourselves must ruminate in our thoughts (153–5). This same concept is discussed at length by the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus (first century BC–first century AD):

[Moses] adds a general method for proving and testing the ten kinds [of pure domesticated quadrupeds], based on two signs, the parted hoof and the chewing of the cud. Any kind which lacks both or one of these is unclean [Lev. 11:3; Deut. 14:6–8]. Now both these two are symbols to teacher and learner of the method best suited for acquiring knowledge, the method by which the better is distinguished from the worse, and thus confusion is avoided. For just as a cud-chewing animal after biting through the food keeps it at rest in the gullet, again after a bit draws it up and masticates it and then passes it on to the belly, so the pupil after receiving from the teacher through his ears the principles and lore of wisdom prolongs the process of learning, as he cannot at once apprehend and grasp

them securely, till by using memory to call up each thing that he has heard by constant exercises which act as the cement of conceptions, he stamps a firm impression of them on his soul. But the firm apprehension of conceptions is clearly useless unless we discriminate and distinguish them so that we can choose what we should choose and avoid the contrary, and this distinguishing is symbolized by the parted hoof. For the way of life is twofold, one branch leading to vice, the other to virtue and we must turn away from the one and never forsake the other

(*Spec. Laws* 4:106–8; trans. Colson, 1984, 8:73–5).

For Philo, eating biblically means eating rationally. A good thinker is a good eater.

As the previous passages have also implied, a good eater is also an ethical person (and vice versa). We encounter this concept elsewhere in Philo's corpus:

But so prolific is [Moses] in virtue and versatile in giving admirable lessons, that not content with his own prowess, he challenges it to further contest. He has forbidden any lamb or kid or other like kind of livestock to be snatched away from its mother before it is weaned. He has also forbidden the killing of the mother and offspring on the same day. He now crowns his bounty with the words "Thou shalt not seethe a lamb in his mother's milk." For he held that it was grossly improper that the substance which fed the living animal should be used to season and flavour the same after its death, and that while nature provided for its conservation by creating the stream of milk and ordaining that it should pass through the mother's breasts as through conduits, the license of man should rise to such a height as to misuse what had sustained its life to destroy also the body which remains in existence. If indeed anyone thinks good to boil flesh in milk, let him do so without cruelty and keeping clear of impiety. Everywhere there are herds of cattle innumerable, which are milked everyday by cowherds, goat-herds and shepherds, whose chief source of income as cattle rearers is milk, sometimes liquid and sometimes condensed and coagulated into cheese; and since milk is so abundant, the person who boils the flesh of lambs or kids or any other young animal in their mother's milk, shows himself cruelly brutal in character and gelded of compassion, that most vital of emotions and most nearly akin to the rational soul

(*Virt.* 142–4; trans. Colson, 1984, 8:249–51).

For Philo, the thrice-repeated biblical prohibition against cooking a kid in its mother's milk is a lesson in ethics. To season the meat of a baby with milk from the source upon which it once suckled is not only to mix the domains of life and death; it is also simply cruel. However, it is important to note that Philo clearly has no issue with consuming meat with cheese *in general*

(which, as we shall see below, the rabbis prohibit). Philo's concern is that eating the milk of a mother together with the meat of her child is "cruelly brutal."

In these instances, the *Letter of Aristeas* and Philo represent a pivotal moment in the history of Jewish food. These authors are asking an important question: why? They understand these biblical regulations as binding, but they seek to explain *why* these particular rules were commanded. The importance of this shift for the study of Jewish food laws is often missed by scholars. At this moment, these authors seem to be saying "OK, God commanded these rules. So what do they mean?"

The ancient rabbis asked this question, in various ways and on various occasions, and predictably they arrived at a variety of answers. For example, the rabbis puzzled over what is intended by the wording "These are the *living things* that you may eat..." (Lev. 11:2). In this passage, the Lord commands the Israelites concerning which domesticated quadrupeds they may consume. While this passage in Leviticus goes on to explain that these animals must chew their cud and have split hooves, the rabbis puzzle over the precise wording of this initial comment. Why "living things" (often translated simply as "creatures") and not another word? According to a general rabbinic principle, every word in the Hebrew Bible is intentional and has the potential to convey meaning. It is the job of the rabbi to determine these precise meanings. Paradoxically, multiple "precise" meanings were tolerated, and even encouraged, in rabbinic thought. In *Leviticus Rabbah* 13:2, one possible explanation is offered.

Rabbi Tanhum son of Hanilai said: This may be compared with the case of a physician who went to visit two sick persons, one who would live, and another who would die. To the one who would live, he said, "This you may eat, that you may not eat." But to the one who would not live, he said, "Whatever he wants [to eat], bring it to him." Thus, of the other nations of the world, who are not destined for the life of the World to Come, it is written in regard to them, "[Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you]; as for the green herbs, I have given you all" [Gen. 9:3]. But to Israel, who are destined for the life of the World to Come, [God said], "These are the *living things* that you may eat..." [Lev. 11:2] (emphasis added).

So why does Leviticus 11:2 mention "living things"? Because those who consume only "living" things will partake in the World to Come. (The rabbis believed that there were two worlds: the present world and the World to Come. The World to Come, a future world in which the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished, is often used to solve the problem of theodicy, or divine justice.) The other nations of the world are bound by the earlier commandment, given to Noah in Genesis 9, allowing them to eat "all." Israelites (meaning, for the rabbis, Jews) cannot eat "every moving thing that

lives”; they must follow Leviticus 11 and eat only “living things.” This subtle difference in wording is read by the rabbis to mean that non-Jews may enjoy all food in this world, but then do not get to enter the World to Come, entrance to which is reserved for Jews who eat only “living things.”

Interestingly, later in *Leviticus Rabbah* 13:3 we learn that Jews who abstain from eating these foods in this world will get to eat them in the World to Come, where the dietary laws change. However, until that time, Jews must only eat “living things,” which explains the meaning of Leviticus 11:2.

This interpretation is by no means clear from reading Leviticus 11:2. Yet, it is clearly a rabbinic attempt to explicate this verse. In the process, we learn that, for the rabbis, the biblical food laws mandate a diet that possesses all of the essential vitamins and nutrients to guarantee one’s entrance into the World to Come. This is one answer to the “why?” question. Why did God command these dietary rules? So that, by eating in this manner, Jews may merit entrance into the World to Come.

This explanation is one of many that the rabbis offer. Again, multiple opinions are regarded neither as problematic nor as mutually exclusive, even if they directly contradict each other. The ancient rabbinic enterprise is about possibilities; it is about uncovering questions and then parsing the potential (more often convoluted than realistic) scenarios. Questions are important. Answers, however, are not.

An excellent example of this rabbinic tendency is their discussions of the separation of milk and meat. Unlike Philo, who read the biblical commandment not to cook a kid in its mother’s milk literally, the rabbis read this injunction to apply much more broadly: “All meat is forbidden to be cooked in milk, except for the meat of fish and locusts” (*m. Hul.* 8:1). Anything in the category of meat is forbidden to be cooked with anything in the category of milk. Although not quoted, *m. Hullin* 8:1 clearly offers its interpretation of the thrice-repeated biblical injunction. In the process, the commandment has gone from particular to general.

Once one reads this law as referring to a general prohibition, however, several problems arise (in general, see Kraemer, 2009, 39–72, 87–121). Why is the law repeated three times? Is chicken, which produces no milk, considered “meat” for the purposes of this law? How far does this separation go? And so on. These questions, and many more, are asked numerous times in rabbinic literature (e.g. *Mek. Kaspa* 5; *b. Hul.* 103b–105a). These answers are multiple, often contradictory, and rarely definitive.

To offer one concrete example, let us examine the question of why the law is repeated verbatim three separate times in the Hebrew Bible (Exod. 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21).

Rabbi Jonathan says: Why is it stated in three places? Once to apply to domesticated animals, once to apply to wild animals, and once to apply to

fowl. Abba Hanin in the name of Rabbi Eliezer says: Why is it stated in three places? Once to apply to large cattle, once to apply to goats, and once to apply to sheep. Rabbi Shimon son of Eleazer says: Why is it stated in three places? Once to apply to large cattle, once to apply to small cattle, and once to apply to wild animals. Rabbi Shimon son of Yohai says: Why is it stated in three places? Once is a prohibition against eating it, once is a prohibition against deriving benefit from it, and once is a prohibition against cooking it

(*Mek. Kaspa* 5).

All of these rabbis agree that each of the three repetitions teach something unique. However, they do not agree on what each lesson is. The reader of this text is confused. Whose opinion is the correct one? Are these laws about large cattle, small cattle, and wild animals? If so, what about fowl?

Rather than looking for answers (which later rabbinic texts will attempt to offer), we should examine the process. As noted earlier, classical rabbinic literature is more concerned with the journey than the destination. In this case, there is a shared assumption that each time this injunction appears it communicates a new facet of the law. Thus, why was the law repeated? To explicate its intended applicability fully. However, simply knowing this is to possess a hieroglyph without a Rosetta Stone. The Hebrew Bible is thus cryptic and requires a rabbinic cipher to decode it. By offering us multiple answers, we see the range of possibilities imagined by the rabbis. Yet, though we have precise meanings of this passage, *the precise meaning* remains unresolved.

“Why do we eat the way we do?” This is the question that many Jews asked themselves throughout antiquity. (Unsurprisingly, it is a question that continues to be asked today.) These Jews accepted as binding the dietary rules contained in the Hebrew Bible. However, they faced two related problems: (i) the rationale for these rules is not explicit in the biblical text, and (ii) the rules do not address every variable in their changing reality. To address these concerns, Jews offered explanations for these rules and, especially in the case of the rabbis, interpreted and expanded biblical regulations.

Jewish Meals in Antiquity

Omnivores have a major dilemma: they require a variety of foods in order to acquire all of the nutrients necessary for survival. Unlike species that can survive on a single food source for sustenance, omnivores must venture out into a dangerous world where choosing the right or wrong mushroom is the difference between life and death. As omnivores, humans have not only learned to eschew certain foods that are poisonous, they have also developed cultural constructions whereby certain otherwise edible food items are tabooed.

In our glimpse of the Jewish meal in antiquity, we have seen how Jews both solve the omnivore's dilemma and use food taboos to live in this world and the World to Come. In many ways, Jews in antiquity obtained, prepared, and consumed food in a similar manner to their Mediterranean contemporaries. Yet, there were important differences, including specific benedictions, animal prohibitions, and other practices such as the prohibition on mixing milk and meat. These differences served to divide Jews from non-Jews and rabbinic Jews from non-rabbinic Jews. However, they also served to unite (rabbinic) Jews, as the rabbis themselves note:

[The other nations] would then go up to Jerusalem and observe Israel [the people of Israel, or Jews] – who worshipped only one God and ate only one food; whereas, amongst the nations, the god of one [nation] was not the god of another, and the food of one [nation] was not the food of another. [Thus,] they would say: “There is no better nation to cling to than this”

(Sifre Deut. 354).

As this text implies, through theological and culinary monotheism – worshipping one God and eating one food – Jews are the envy of their neighbors. They unite through eating one food together.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Chris Jones and Dennis Smith for their insightful comments. Any mistakes that remain are my own.

FURTHER READING

The starting point for the study of Jewish meals in antiquity is the outdated but still useful multi-volume work in German by Samuel Krauss (1910). An attempt to update this material has recently appeared (Hezser, 2010; see especially the entry by Kraemer). Another new volume that takes the archaeological evidence into full account is that by Magness (2011, especially 77–84). Students interested in this subject will find a growing library of relevant books in English, some focusing on the earliest group of rabbis (Rosenblum, 2010a), others on Judaism from ancient to modern times (Kraemer, 2009), and others examining Judaism from a comparative perspective (Freidenreich (2011), who compares Jewish, Christian, and Muslim texts on food). Of the previous three works, that by Rosenblum (2010a) is particularly suggested for those looking for further bibliography. The books by Kraemer (2009) and Freidenreich (2011) are written for a wider audience and are thus recommended for their readability. More technical discussions on the diet and economics of food for Jews in antiquity can be found in the work of Broshi (2001), Hamel (1990), MacDonald (2008),

Rosenfeld & Menirav (2005), and Safrai (1994). For broader perspectives on food and Judaism, see the many essays in Greenspoon, Simkins, & Shapiro (2005), Hecker (2005), Diner (2001), and the popular books by Cooper (1993) and Fishkoff (2010).

CHAPTER 34

Food and Dining in Early Christianity

Dennis E. Smith

Food and dining played a significant role in the formative period of early Christianity. This is largely because Christianity took shape as a home-based phenomenon, and when people held gatherings in private homes in the early Christian world those gatherings tended to take place in the dining room. In the beginning decades of Christianity, there were no church buildings; buildings designed specifically for Christian worship only began to be constructed, using a variety of models, in the third century, and it was a development that was slow getting started. Instead of church buildings, early Christians met together in private homes, or house churches (Smith, 2012, 3–6).

Our best information about early Christian gatherings is found in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, written in the early 50s AD. In [Chapter 11](#), the phrases “When you come together to eat” and “when you come together as an assembly (*ekklesia*)” are used in parallel in the same context and clearly refer to the same meeting (11:17, 18, 20, 33; see also 14:26). This indicates that the gathering at table is not a side event or merely the social side of their religious life; rather it is the primary means by which they gather as a religious community. This is consistently the view of Paul.

The meal gatherings of early Christians followed the model of the Greco-Roman banquet. The evidence for this is indicated in Paul’s version of the last supper story, which he quotes as a model for the Corinthian meals (1 Cor. 11:23–5). Variations of this story are also found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In Paul’s version, Jesus first speaks a benediction over bread. Then, “after the *deipnon*” he says a benediction over the wine. What is clearly pictured here is the format of the Greek banquet, in which the *deipnon* was the first course and the *symposion* was the second course. According to the Greek model, the symposium was the setting for extended conversation, as indicated in the tradition of the philosophical banquet.

Jewish communal meals also followed the Greek symposium model but centered their symposium conversation on *torah*, as indicated in this second-century BC text:

Let your discourse be with the wise, and let all your discussions be concerned with the law of the Most High. Let righteous men be your fellow diners, and let your pride be founded on the fear of the Lord

(Sir 9:15–6).

This tradition was likely followed by early Christians as well.

Other components of early Christian worship at the gathering include prayers and songs and other forms of inspired religious expression (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:26), all of which are known components of Greco-Roman banquets, particularly at the meals of Greco-Roman associations (Smith, 2003a, 87–131). Accordingly, we can conclude that for the most part early Christian gatherings took place at meals, which took the form of the Greek symposium and at which Christians carried out all of their worship activities (Taussig, 2009, 47, 71–9, 104–13).

Jews and Greeks at the Early Christian Table

Early Christianity began as a Jewish sect, and early on was embedded in the Jewish world. Although Jews followed Greco-Roman dining customs, the Jewish table emphasized a distinctive menu defined by *kashrut* (Marks & Taussig, 2014, 13–39). Jews were known for their dietary laws, particularly represented by their avoidance of pork, but Greeks and Romans knew little about their reasons for these practices. Plutarch showed an antiquarian interest in Jewish dietary laws by constructing a dinner-table conversation around the topic, “Concerning whether the Jews abstain from pork because of pious regard or disgust for the pig” (*Quaest. conv.* 4.5). Others criticized the insularity of the Jewish dietary laws. To Tacitus, they were “sinister and abominable and owe their vigor to their depravity” (*Hist.* 5.4–5). To Diodorus, the refusal of Jews to eat with Gentiles was considered to be a sign of their “hatred of humanity” (Diod. Sic. 34.1–2).

To the early Christians the meal was a marker of community solidarity. As Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 10:17, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all share the one bread.” Here Paul is echoing the language of Greek moralists of his day such as Plutarch, who pointed to the table as a “friend-maker,” as especially signified in the sharing of food, drink, and conversation (*Quaest. conv.* 612D, 660B). When Gentiles began to join Christian groups, and Jewish and Gentile Christians gathered at the same table, the cultural differences in regard to the menu created significant tensions. What was at stake was the very unity of the Christian communities.

At Antioch of Syria in about 48 AD, approximately 15 years after the death of Jesus, a Gentile community of Jesus followers had emerged, and Paul had become one of their leaders. It was visited by a delegation from the Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem, led by Peter and associates of James, the brother of Jesus. Paul tells the story in this way:

But when Cephas [i.e. Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was condemned by his own actions. For until certain individuals came from James, it was his custom to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself from them because he was afraid of the circumcision faction

The issue here is most likely dietary laws, which the James delegation apparently followed in such a form that they would not eat at a Gentile table. Apparently neither Peter nor Paul followed the dietary laws in that same form, but Peter also differed from Paul in his desire to appease the James group. For Paul, however, the meal was viewed as constitutive of the Christian community, so that, as he saw it, to withdraw from that table was to deny equal religious status to the Gentile Christians. That is why he “opposed Peter to his face.” It is likely that this conflict was not resolved at this time, since it continued to occur in other Christian groups, most specifically at Corinth, where the divisive issue of “meat which had been sacrificed to idols” was likely concerned with dietary laws (1 Cor, 8:1–13), and Rome, where a division had developed at the community meal over dietary laws (Rom. 14:1–15:13).

Hospitality at the Early Christian Table

Houses from the Greco-Roman period that have been preserved in the archaeological data tend to be from the elite level of the populace. Such houses are not likely to have been the type utilized by early Christian groups, since the Christian movement tended to be concentrated in the middle and lower classes (Friesen, 2004). Nevertheless, there are patterns in house design that can be assumed at all levels. Elite houses tended to have elaborately designed dining rooms, but even modest houses, if they had multiple rooms, included a room where guests could be entertained, most commonly at a meal. Indeed, no matter the size of the dwelling, if there were sufficient space to invite guests to one’s home, such a space would have to be usable as a dining room. It could have been a room designed specifically for dining, with spaces marked out for the placement of the couches. Or it could be a room that was adaptable for dining, which would then be furnished with portable couches or by simply placing cushioning on the floor for the recliners (Smith, 2012, 3–15). In Mark 14:15 the room that had been prepared for the passover meal of Jesus and his disciples had been “spread” (*strōnnumi*) in preparation for the meal, a term which refers to the spreading of cushioning either on couches or on the floor (Danker, 2000, 949).

The ritual process whereby outsiders were conveyed into a private dwelling as guests was overseen by the householder functioning as host. Thus Paul identifies house church communities by the name of the householder/host of the gathering. The standard references to house churches occur in the greetings sections of the letters of Paul, for example: “Greet Prisca and Aquila ... Greet also the *ekklesia* (gathering) in their house” (Rom. 16:3, 5). Other house churches in Rome were hosted by Phoebe, Aristobulus, Narcissus, a group of “brothers and sisters,” and a group of “saints” (Rom. 16:1, 10, 11, 14, 15). In Corinth, house churches were hosted by Chloe, Stephanas, and

Gaius (1 Cor. 1:11, 16:15; Rom. 15:23), as well as Prisca and Aquila before they went to Rome (1 Cor. 16:19). In Colossae, a house church was hosted by Philemon (Phlm. 1–2).

The hosting of outsiders in one's home was connected with the ancient practice of hospitality. In the Greek language, hospitality was most commonly identified with the Greek term *xenia*, a term that emphasized its nature as a ritual interaction between the host and the stranger. Thus Paul refers to a certain Gaius hosting early Christians in his home with the term *xenos* ("Gaius, who is my host and host to the whole church, sends you greetings," Rom. 16:23), a term that refers both to the "stranger" who receives hospitality and to the host who offers hospitality (Danker, 2000, 684).

Hospitality as a Cultural Value

The concept of hospitality to the stranger was a shared value throughout ancient Mediterranean culture. It can be characterized by two versions of a popular story motif, which set forth the hospitality theme. The Jewish version of this tradition is expressed in the story of Abraham and Sarah at the Oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18–19). In this story, Abraham and Sarah offer hospitality to three traveling strangers. After serving them a sumptuous meal of the best they have, they discover that the strangers are actually divine guests disguised as ordinary humans. The guests then reward Abraham and Sarah for their hospitality. They next go to Sodom and Gomorrah to test their hospitality, and when these two cities fail the test, they are destroyed.

In the Greco-Roman tradition one of the better-known versions is Ovid's story of Baucis and Philemon (*Met.* 8). Here an elderly couple of simple means offer the best meal they can muster, meager though it is, to two strangers who knock on their door. They then discover they have entertained divine guests, Zeus and Hermes, who are disguised as ordinary humans. The couple is rewarded for their hospitality, while the village that surrounds them perishes in a flood because no one else in the village would offer hospitality to the strangers.

The "stranger" in these stories is the archetypal "other," generally someone who is from a distant land or another culture. Hospitality is shown here to be embedded in Mediterranean culture as a ritual means for resolving tension with the displaced "other" by peaceful rather than violent means. It is signified by hosting the stranger in a meal in which he/she is treated as guest of honor and is feted with the finest that the host has to offer.

Such stories were widely known in the ancient world. The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews suggests that many such stories were known, leading to the advice: "Do not neglect the practice of hospitality, for it is in this way that

some have unknowingly provided hospitality to divine messengers” (Heb. 13:2). The Baucis and Philemon story is referenced directly in Acts 14:11–4, which tells of the locals at Lystra being so impressed with the miracles being done by Barnabas and Paul that they conclude the apostles must be Zeus and Hermes in disguise.

In the gospels, the Abraham story is referenced at several points. For example, Jesus’ instruction to the disciples when he sends out on an itinerant mission includes these words: “if there are some who will not welcome you nor listen to your words, depart from that house or city and shake the dust from your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that city” (Matt. 10:14–15; see also Luke 5:10–12). The hospitality story tradition is referenced indirectly in several texts in which the divine personage appears in disguise as a stranger in need of hospitality. For example, in Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus tells a parable about a king who appears to his subjects in disguise to test their hospitality. He then divides “the sheep” from “the goats,” consigning the goats, who were inhospitable, to eternal punishment, and the sheep, who were hospitable, to eternal bliss. In Luke 24:13–35, two disciples meet a stranger on the road to Emmaus, and only recognize him as the risen Lord whenever they invite him in for hospitality at their table.

Hospitality in the Letters of Paul

In Romans Paul explicitly references hospitality as the means for addressing cultural tension between Gentiles and Jews at the same table. It is expressed most specifically in Romans 15:7: “Welcome one another in the same way as Christ has welcomed you.”

The term translated “welcome” in this text is *proslambanomai*, which in this context means “to extend a welcome or receive into one’s home or circle of acquaintances” (Danker, 2000, 883). It is used elsewhere by Paul in Philemon 1–2 and 17 to refer to Philemon’s obligations to offer hospitality as host to the *ekklesia* in his house.

In Romans, this motif is used in reference to issues at a mixed table of Jews and Gentiles in the Roman Christian community.

Extend a welcome to those who are weak in matters of faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling about matters of opinion. Some believe it is okay to eat anything, but others, namely the weak, only eat vegetables. The one who eats should not treat with disdain the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat should not pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed such a one

(Rom. 14:1–3).

Later in the chapter he makes explicit reference to the underlying issue behind

the vegetarian menu chosen by some, namely dietary laws: “I have become convinced by the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean” (Rom. 14:14). Because dietary laws were primarily concerned with impurities connected with meat, a Jew could eat at a Gentile table if he ate only vegetables. Thus at the Roman Christian community table, it appears that some were following Jewish dietary laws, presumably the Jewish Christians, while others were not, presumably the Gentile Christians.

Paul has adapted the hospitality motif and made it a metaphor for grace: “in the same way as Christ has welcomed you” (Rom. 15:7). This welcome was experienced by the members when they gathered, for it was an act of hospitality that brought them together at the table. Paul then urges them to practice hospitality in the same manner as they have received it (“welcome one another”), in this case by accepting the “other” at the table along with whatever dietary restrictions may accompany them.

Hospitality in the Gospels

The gospel narratives provide glimpses into the Christian communities of their day in the form of idealized images of the community being formed by the historical Jesus. One of the more prominent images they use is a meal scene. This suggests a likely crossover from the idealized, and legendary, Jesus story to the real-life experience of the Jesus community, especially since these texts would have been “performed” (or read) at the meal gatherings of the gospel communities.

A foundational text for this theme is Mark’s story of the meal of Jesus with tax collectors and sinners, a story that is also given a prominent role in Matthew and Luke.

Jesus was reclining in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many such ones who followed him. The scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why is he eating with tax collectors and sinners?” When Jesus heard this he said to them, “It is not the healthy but the sick who have need of a physician. I did not come to invite the righteous but rather to invite the sinners”

(Mark 2:15–7; cf. Matt. 9:10–13; Luke 5:29–32).

This story draws on motifs common to symposium literature. Here Jesus is portrayed in the role of the sage who presents wise table talk while dining with followers. It is a classic formula in symposium literature, which stretches from Plato and Xenophon to Plutarch and Macrobius (Smith, 2003a, 47–9). Jesus is also portrayed here as the host who issues the invitations to the meal. The term for “invite,” *kaleo*, is commonly used in meal invitations in the

Greco-Roman world (Smith, 2003a, 22–4). It also has a derivative meaning in reference to a “summons” or “call” (Danker, 2000, 502–3). Here it has a double meaning, consistent with the metaphorical function of the story, in which the “invitation” to the meal is also a “call” to discipleship.

Throughout the history of the reclining banquet, the act of reclining was consistently seen as a sign of status. Individuals of lower status might be required to sit as a mark of their status if present at a meal where higher-status individuals were reclining (Smith, 2003a, 14–18; Roller, 2006, 1–14). In the Mark text quoted above, the symbolism of “reclining together with” (*synanakeimai*) is sufficient to indicate that the “tax collectors and sinners” are fully integrated into the dining community and equal to all other guests, including the “disciples.” Thus the meal in this story functions metaphorically as a symbol for the community of God, and the invitation of Jesus represents his hospitable “welcome” into the community. As a tensive symbol, it would have even more significance if, in fact, it is a story that originates in the context of a community of Jesus followers gathered at table in honor of the Lord Jesus.

The phrase “tax collectors and sinners” functioned as an open-ended metaphor for outsiders in general, corresponding to the “other” in the hospitality tradition. In the time of the Gospel writers, the Jesus movement was becoming more and more culturally diverse. Yet according to gospel tradition, the historical mission of Jesus took place entirely in a Jewish context. Therefore, by picturing Jesus as a prototypical host, whose hospitality would be extended to the classic “other,” gospel writers were able to address the cultural diversity of their own day. As they told the Jesus story, his invitation became an open-ended one and prefigured the eventual development of the Gentile mission.

Eucharist and *Agapē* – the Traditional View

According to a longstanding interpretation, presented in a classic study by Dom Gregory Dix (1945), early Christianity from the very beginning divided its meal rituals into two types. The Eucharist was the sacramental meal and consisted of the partaking of a token amount of bread and wine, accompanied by specified liturgical prayers. The *agapē*, or “love feast,” was the communal meal and was a social gathering of the community rather than a sacrament. The *agapē* was a full meal and was normally celebrated in the evening.

The centerpiece of the Eucharist were the “words of institution,” those sections of the Last Supper text in which Jesus gave specific meanings to the sacramental bread and wine. The bread was defined with some variation of these words: “This is my body which is given for you,” which is the earliest recorded version (1 Cor. 11:24). The wine was defined with some variation of these words: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor. 11:25). Over time, early Christianity developed a standard version of these sayings

(Bradshaw, 2004, 1–23).

The cornerstone of the traditional eucharistic meal is the Last Supper story, found in four versions (1 Cor. 11:23–5; Mark 14:22–6; Matt. 26:26–9; Luke 22:14–20). Here, it is argued, Jesus is recorded as having commanded the observance of the Eucharist as sacrament. Although the sacrament was incorporated into a meal in the time of Paul, early on, it is argued, it became separated from the meal proper and became a token meal, in which only a taste of bread and wine was taken. From the beginning the Eucharist was accompanied by a liturgy, which began with the early last supper stories and eventually resulted in the eucharistic prayers that are still central to the church's liturgy today. In that sense, the Eucharist today traces its origin to the event of Jesus' Last Supper.

Eucharist and *Agapē* – a New Perspective

Recent research has overturned the old model and is in process of constructing a new model. Components of the new model include a new emphasis on the phenomenon of Greco-Roman meals (Klinghardt, 1996; Smith, 2003a), a reassessment of eucharistic origins (Bradshaw, 2004), and a renewed focus on the diversity of early Christian meal traditions (McGowan, 1999). Whereas the old model emphasized the singularity of the tradition, traceable all the way back to Jesus, the new model emphasizes the social origins of a diversity of Christian meal practices.

The old model proposed that terms such as “eucharist” and *agapē* maintained a stable meaning throughout the early period and consistently referred to specific types of meal. New research has shown, however, that terminology is fluid at the early period. Neither “Lord's supper” nor “eucharist” nor “*agapē*” maintain a consistent meaning.

The term “Lord's supper” was introduced by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:20 and refers to a full meal that also includes the “words of institution.” Clearly, in Paul's community, “Lord's supper” was not a token meal, nor did he intend that it become one (Smith, 2003a, 216–7).

The first technical use of the term “eucharist” is in the late first-century document known as the *Didache*: “Concerning the eucharist (*eucharistia*), practice it (*eucharisteō*) in this way ...” (*Did.* 9.1). What follows is a thanksgiving prayer to God for “the holy vine of David, your child,” but no reference to the last supper or to the death of Jesus. Then, “after you have had enough to eat” (10:1), another thanksgiving prayer is prescribed. The “eucharist” in this text is a full meal and includes special prayers for bread and wine, but it makes no reference to the “words of institution” that are otherwise considered essential to the Eucharist.

The term *agapē* is used to refer to a “feast” of the community as early as the

second half of the first century (Jude 12, 2 Pet. 2:13). Clearly it is a reference to a full meal that has significant liturgical meaning to the Christian community, but it is not at all clear what that meal consisted of besides the fact that it was a full meal. In the late first century, Ignatius of Antioch included the *agapē* as one of two primary “sacraments” that required the presence of a bishop: “It is not permissible apart from the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate the love-feast (*agapē*)” (*Smyrn.* 8:2). This indicates that the term *agapē* referred to a full meal that was also the primary sacramental meal.

In the late first century, Pliny, in his letter to Trajan about the Christians, reports that Christians he had examined spoke of two types of meeting, one in the morning and one in the evening. The morning meeting was characterized by hymns and a “solemn oath” (*sacramentum*) on issues of morality. In the evening of the same day they met for a communal meal (*Ep.* 10.96), following a cultural norm in which meals of significance (i.e. banquets) were regularly held in the evenings (Smith, 2003a, 20–2).

This pattern for morning and evening gatherings, in which the evening gathering is a communal meal, is a common occurrence in later Christian data. However, the terminology of “eucharist” for the morning gathering and “*agapē*” for the evening gathering is not consistently applied to these meetings. The first to do so was Tertullian (ca. 200 AD, in Africa), yet he also identified the evening gathering as central to the liturgical life of the community:

We do not recline until we have first tasted of prayer to God. So much is eaten as satisfies hunger; as much drunk as is fitting for the pure. Appetite is satisfied to the extent appropriate for those who are mindful that they have to worship God even at night; speech, as for those who know the Master is listening. After washing of hands, and lights, each is invited into the middle to sing to God as able, from knowledge of sacred writings or from their own mind; thus it can be tested how much has been drunk. Prayer again closes the feast

(*Apol.* 39.16–18; trans. McGowan, 2004, 168).

However, in about the year 250, practices in Africa had shifted, at least according to Cyprian. He describes a morning eucharist with bread and wine but does not mention an evening banquet. If evening banquets were held, they were not given much significance by Cyprian (McGowan, 2004, 172–5).

On the other hand, throughout the first three centuries of Christianity, while communal meals were common across a wide spectrum of Christian groups, they manifested a wide diversity in regard to diet. Bread and wine were commonly used as sacred foods, but some groups substituted bread and water instead. Other food items given ritual significance were cheese, milk and honey, oil, salt, various fruits and vegetables, and fish (McGowan, 1999, 89–

Over time the central liturgical focus changed from an evening banquet to a morning token meal, thus emphasizing a shift from sacred event to sacred food. Accompanying this development was a shift in architectural space from dining room to assembly hall. By the time of Constantine, the basilica had become the preferred architectural space for a standardized eucharistic liturgy. Gone was the banquet as the central liturgy of the community. Now the Eucharist was defined by a token meal centered on the altar and presided over by a priest.

FURTHER READING

Comprehensive analyses of early Christian meals have been produced by Klinghardt (1996) and Smith (2003a). Their studies have established that early Christian meals were embedded in the larger phenomenon of the Greco-Roman banquet and, as such, functioned as the matrix for early Christian social formation and early forms of worship. Continuing this research focus, Bradshaw (2002, 2004) and McGowan (1997, 1999, 2004) have produced a series of studies that dismantle standard theories of eucharistic origins and propose new models for rethinking early Christian meals and the development of the Eucharist. White has tackled the issue of eucharistic origins by examining the development of Christian architecture (1990, 1997, 1998). Taussig has proposed the meal as the locus of early Christian social formation (2009). Smith has examined the significance of the house church as the location for early Christian meal gatherings (2012). An international team of scholars has tackled the significance of meals for understanding social and gender conflict in early Christian communities (Smith & Taussig, 2012). These studies together establish the importance of early Christian meals as the basis for understanding a whole range of issues connected with Christian origins.

CHAPTER 35

Byzantium

Béatrice Caseau

The Byzantine Empire spans more than a thousand years, starting in the fourth century with the conversion of emperor Constantine to the Christian faith and with the foundation of Constantinople by the same emperor, and ending with the fall of the city into the hands of Muslim Ottoman Turks in 1453. In the fourth century, it is a very wide empire, extending from Hadrian's Wall in England to Egypt, and from Spain to Armenia. In the fifteenth century, it is reduced to a small and fragmented territory, mostly around its once magnificent capital, Constantinople, but its cultural influence extends from the Balkans to Russia. During the first centuries of its long existence (fourth to seventh), its food culture was similar to the Roman one, with all the regional variety linked to its geographical extension. Being, however, mostly centered on the Mediterranean, its three main staple foods were bread, wine, and olive oil. For most of the population, the basic diet of bread or cereal gruel was complemented with legumes, such as lentils and beans. Fruits and vegetables of different sorts might also enhance the diet, such as figs in warm regions and plums in colder areas, leeks and cabbages almost everywhere. Finally, animal proteins were consumed: fresh fish close to the sea, the much cheaper salted fish everywhere, to which meat, eggs, and cheese should be added. Cheese was widely produced around the Mediterranean, and one of the staple protein foods of the poor (Jacoby, 2005). Wine was the most common drink (Kaplan, 2007; Kislinger, 2007). Those among the Byzantines who could afford it ate and enjoyed all sorts of meats, including game (Dalby, 2010, 2003a). In such a wide territory, different soil and climatic conditions created different regional culinary traditions, based on local production (Bryer, 2008). New products came to be known and used, and the Byzantine food culture evolved with the addition of new ingredients such as sugar from sugar cane, and with the acquired taste for some specific products such as Vlach cheese or Malvasia wine. The Empire had to endure invasions of peoples, who brought their own culinary traditions. In thirteenth-century Greece, Frankish crusaders ate meat stews, at a time when the Byzantines mostly ate pulses. The introduction of deep-bodied stew-pots, a change in the type of common cooking-pot, probably illustrates a modification in cooking habits in Greece, which can be linked to the new inhabitants. Finally, the Ottoman invasion brought Nomadic Turks' favorite foods, such as diluted yoghurts and a common Muslim taste for sweets (Vroom, 2000). Naturally, we know more about the elite's taste in food than about the rest of the population, because written sources came from the well-educated social strata. It is however,

sometimes possible to compare literary sources with archaeobotanical or archaeozoological data discovered in situ during excavations.

Heirs of the Greco-Roman culture, the Byzantines considered that control over one's appetite and moderation in food and drink was a moral virtue to be praised in everybody. Frugality in eating and drinking was especially underlined as a quality in the portrait of rulers (Ammianus on Constantius II, 21.16.5). At the opposite end of the spectrum, depicting an emperor as gluttonous or drunk was a sure way to undermine his reputation. From the Macedonian dynasty onwards, historians accuse Emperor Michael III of drinking too much, a way to silently justify his murder by Basil I, the founder of the dynasty. John Skylitzes, for example, writes "Michael would become intoxicated from drinking un-watered wine, then, when he was drunk, command some very irregular things to be done: one man to have his ears cut off, another his nose and the head of a third" (transl. Wortley). Michel Psellos reproves different eleventh-century emperors for overindulging in tasty foods and being so swollen they were sick (Jouanno, 2003). The lack of self-restraint in the consumption of food and drink was condemned as a moral fault, a weakness indicating a poor ruler. Of Constantine VIII, Michael Psellos writes that he was an excellent cook, very talented in preparing a sauce and in creating mouth-watering flavored dishes, but he also describes him as a ruler neglecting State affairs. Byzantine society understood the importance of lavish banquets as an imperial duty, but it believed in a connection between moral stature and control over one's appetites, which combined the Romans' Stoic approach with the Christian understanding that asceticism was necessary to get closer to God. Fasting was deemed to have spiritual benefits and became an important element of one's religious life as well as a social requirement. In the medieval period, fasting was mandatory, two days a week (theologically justified: Wednesday, for Christ was betrayed on a Wednesday, and Friday, because on that day he was crucified) and for five long fasting periods. The longest, the Great Lent, started seven weeks before Easter. During the fast, some foods were not consumed. Meat and fish with blood were excluded, but most fish or shellfish were acceptable, even if in the fourteenth century the patriarch Athanasios recommended not to eat fish, but only vegetables, legumes, fruits, and little cakes called "*kollyba*". The Byzantines eased into the Great Lent by a gradual suppression of foods. The first week of the Great Lent, the last week where it is possible to eat cheese, on the Tuesday of *Tyrophagia*, the patriarch invited the emperor and the imperial dignitaries to a banquet where a soup, which included cheese, was served, while a sermon on fasting was read (Oikonomidès *Liste de préseances* 192). After that week, all animal products, including eggs, cheese, and milk, were rejected. A distinction was made between fasting days with or without cooking oil. Cooked vegetables and bread constituted the menu of strict fasting days. One step further in fasting took place with eating only raw vegetables. Finally, no food at all was consumed on a few days such as Good Friday. Fasting entailed

different obligations for married people and for monks and nuns. During the Great Lent, in most coenobitic communities, medieval monks could expect one meal a day (at the ninth hour), made of vegetables cooked without oil, shellfish or fish, on Saturdays and Sundays, and a drink of “*eukraton*”, a warm drink mixing water with cumin, pepper, and anise. Clerics and lay people also had to fast and they too were forbidden to eat meat, but on many of these days they could eat fish and shellfish on top of cereals, legumes, and vegetables. It was up to them to set the amount of food on their table, once the forbidden elements had been removed. Lay people could be very ascetic but they did not have to be, and Niketas Choniates reveals that some enjoyed meat stews during fasting days (Caseau 2015).

Christians considered food a God-given gift, for which he should be thanked. Prayers started and ended a meal. In the imperial palace, this was very formally done. The ninth-century treatise of Philotheos on seating arrangements during imperial banquets mentions antiphonal singing before the banquet given for the feast of Epiphany. On this festive day, members of Hagia Sophia’s clergy as well as the patriarch, members of the palace chapels’ clergy, and metropolitan bishops were invited. Cantors on one side and orphans on the other led the participants into singing God’s praise (Oikonomides *Liste de préseances* 186).

The Byzantines inherited from antiquity an understanding of the body as composed of four humors, which needed to be kept in balance (see Wilkins in this volume). Foods classified as hot, cold, wet, and dry contributed to maintain or reestablish the balance. This knowledge was spread through medical treatises. Julian’s doctor, Oribasius (born around 320), wrote the first five books of his Medical Compilations on diets, drawing on the texts of Galen in the main. Two centuries later, Theodoric’s doctor, Anthimus, wrote an influential *De observatione ciborum*, which develops principles of dietetics (Mazzini, 1996; Grant, 1996). These texts were then copied and annotated in Byzantine times, as was the dietetic calendar of Hierophilos, sorting out what vegetables and fruits to eat or to avoid each month (Romano, 1999; Koder, 2007). This transmission of ancient knowledge also led to compilations of agricultural calendars and farming manuals such as the *Geoponika*, which dates to the reign of Constantine VII (913–959) (Dalby, 2011; Koder, 1993). The Byzantines absorbed centuries of dietetic traditions, but they were sometimes critical and added their own touch. Symeon Seth, the doctor of emperor Michael VII Doukas (1071–1078), borrows from the ancient *materia medica* but also criticizes Galen and adds knowledge coming from Persian and Arabic sources. He was from Antioch (Brunet, 1939).

What distinguishes the Byzantine Empire from the Roman Empire is the religion of its rulers, who adopted and promoted the Christian faith. Even if minorities also lived in the Byzantine Empire (mainly a Jewish minority, and a Muslim one in later centuries), the Byzantine Empire defined itself as

Christian and created its own religious culture, different from Western, Latin Christianity, and from other Eastern Christian cultures, such as the Armenian. Food choices as well as regulations on fasting periods helped build this religious identity. Dietary boundaries with other religious groups (Polytheists, Jews, Muslims) were created. The enforcement of rules, different from those adopted by other Christian cultures (Latin, Armenian) also built this Byzantine religious culture. Heirs of the Jewish law, readers of the Bible, Byzantine Christians had to make up their minds on what to do with Jewish food taboos. In the first centuries of the Byzantine Empire, they also had issues with food coming from sacrificial offerings to the traditional gods and goddesses of the former Roman Empire and they discussed notions of pollution coming from ingesting such offerings. They drew limits around the freedom granted to them by Christ concerning food. Let us retrace some of the steps that created a specific food culture in Byzantium and analyze the role played by religion in this process.

A Christian Food Culture

The rejection of food from sacrifices

Jews and early Byzantine Christians shared the same aversion to pagan sacrifices. Following Jewish practices, Christians rejected idolatry and all forms of sacrifice offered to the numerous deities worshipped throughout the Empire. Converting to Christianity meant renouncing not only the performance of sacrifice, but also avoiding witnessing it. Before the reign of Constantine, it had not always been possible to avoid being present at sacrifices, and Lactantius recalls the sense of danger and contamination felt by Christians in such a position at the court of Diocletian. After the recognition of the Christian faith as a legally recognized cult of the Empire in 313, sacrifices continued to be performed. The codex calendar of 354 AD records the State-supported public festivals celebrated at Rome, which were also major social events, as they included processions, games, and spectacles as well as sacrifices and banquets (Salzman, 1990, 121–5). Sacrifices could be vegetal or animal, but major festivals included a banquet (Scheid, 1985). Except for holocausts, the gods were kind enough to feed mostly on non-edible parts of the sacrificed animal, such as the entrails, and the rest was shared during a banquet, which celebrated the harmony between gods and humans. Religion tied the civic community together and the sharing of food reflected the social hierarchy of the city, as each participant had a share following his social rank. The surplus of sacrificial meat could be sold on the markets (Isenberg, 1975). Although Saint Paul considered, after Jesus, that Christians were free to eat all kinds of food, for food “will not commend us to God,” he advised Christians not to participate in banquets offered after a

sacrifice for fear that their presence be misunderstood and weaken the conversion of others (1Co 8:4.7–13). So, although Christ himself had made clear that food went through the body and could not make a person impure (Mt 15:11), under the influence of Paul's writings and perhaps also out of a growing distaste for blood sacrifice, the rule was that Christians should avoid food offered to idols at all cost, for fear of being defiled and contaminated by it. Paul had written "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons" (1Co. 10:21). Early Byzantine authors took this recommendation strictly. Paul had recommended eating whatever was sold at the market without enquiring whether or not it came from sacrifice, but fourth-century Christians were warned that food offered to demons polluted those who came into contact with them. "Flee and escape this contagion," advised Firmicus Maternus, in the *De errore profanarum religionum*. Sacrificial food had become taboo. The fourth-century council of Ancyra decrees penance for Christians who take part in the festivals of the heathens, even if they bring their own meat to the banquet. In February 391, a law addressed to the Praetorian Prefect, Albinus, ordered that "No person shall pollute himself with sacrificial animals; no person shall slaughter an innocent victim" (Codex Theodosianus 16.10.10, transl. Pharr).

While it was possible to check public sacrifices, it was far more difficult to control private ones. In a letter to Augustine, bishop of Hippo, a local landowner named Publicola reveals how important and difficult it still was in AD 398 for a pious and scrupulous Christian to avoid all contact with pagan sacrality. He voices his concern by posing questions to the bishop: "Is it lawful for a Christian to use wheat or beans from the threshing-floor, wine or oil from the press, if, with his knowledge, some part of what has been taken thence was offered in sacrifice to a false god?" Publicola had reasons to be concerned, for the meat found at the butcher's could very well come from sacrifices offered to the gods and food at the market from temple estates. Maximus, bishop of Turin in the early fifth century, was aware of the problem. He asked Christian landowners to enforce the law on their lands:

Idolatry is a great evil. It pollutes those who practice it. It pollutes the inhabitants of the region. It pollutes those who look on. The peasant's offering defiles the lord of the land. He cannot avoid pollution, when he eats food, which was gathered by sacrilegious hands, brought forth by earth stained with blood and stored in foul barns

(Maximus of Turin, Sermon 107, transl. Hillgarth, 1986, 55).

This somewhat extreme point of view reveals a real distaste for sacrificial offerings, which is echoed in a prayer for those who have eaten impure food included in the eighth-century Barberini *euchologium*, a book collecting prayers and blessings for different occasions (Parenti & Velkovska, 2000).

Interestingly, this prayer records Jesus' opinion that no food can make a person impure and nevertheless feels it necessary to pray for a person who has eaten impure food. This prayer probably bears the mark of an earlier time, when sacrifices took place, but it may also refer to meat improperly drained of blood. Eating meat with its blood, a taboo in Judaism as blood represented life, was also adopted as a taboo by Byzantine Christianity (Douglas, 1966; Caseau, 2013).

Byzantine Christians and Jewish food taboos

Byzantine apologetic literature insisted on the differences between Judaism and Christianity, and its authors created a historical narrative to explain that the Law, including its food taboos, was imposed on Jews as a punishment for disobeying God, but was no longer necessary for Christians, who were freed from it since Christ had reconciled them with God (Apostolic Const. VI.21). Christ had granted complete freedom from food taboos, and Peter had been invited in a dream to eat with the uncircumcised “four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air” (Act. Ap. 11:6). Yet, the first disciples, who were all Jews, decided to accept non-Jews among the followers of Jesus as long as they abstained from meat offered to idols, blood, and strangled animals (Act. Ap. 15). Among the food taboos of the Jews, the early Christian community decided not to impose the pig taboo, the one identity-food-marker, which marked Jews as different, but they accepted the blood taboo and it eventually became one of the distinctive marks of Byzantine food culture, when compared to the West (Caseau, 2015).

In Northern and Western medieval Europe, pork was a favorite meat. Pig's blood was consumed in black pudding and greatly appreciated. Apicius' *De Re coquinaria*, a compilation dating to the late fourth or early fifth century, records recipes using blood in sauces for it (Apicius 388, ed. André, 1974). In Byzantium, the New Testament blood taboo or the disgust felt about bloody meat was stronger than in the West, yet black pudding (*aimatia*) was nevertheless prepared and consumed, in spite of repeated interdictions: “Divine scripture has commanded us to abstain from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication. Upon those persons, therefore, who, for gluttony's sake contrive with certain skills to render edible the blood of any animal whatsoever, we impose an appropriate penalty. If anyone therefore, henceforth undertakes by any means whatsoever to eat the blood of an animal, if he is a cleric, he shall be deposed, if a layman, excommunicated” (Canon 67, council in Trullo in 692). The *Euchologia* and penitential books record special prayers to purify those who have eaten impure meat (Arranz, 1995, 461–3). Black pudding must have been well loved, for it was still sold in the ninth to tenth century. This independence towards religious prescriptions proves the endurance of culinary traditions, yet it appalled Emperor Leo VI (886–912), who wrote a law forbidding selling and eating blood (Novella 58).

Civil law and canon law united in rejecting black pudding, and slowly influenced mentalities. Balsamon, the twelfth-century canonist, notes that the Latins do not respect the blood taboo and eat strangled animals. The twelfth century is a time where cultural differences between Greeks and Latins were strongly felt. With the same premises, two different Christian cultures had evolved by then. The Byzantines reproached Latins with not following exactly the same religious practices. Food issues were important in the polemical treatises listing the errors of the Latins: they celebrated the Eucharist with azymes, not with leavened bread. In the eyes of the Byzantines, they were Judaizing and did not understand that leaven made the bread “alive.” They mixed Eucharistic wine with cold water and not with hot water (the Zeon) (Congourdeau, 2009). They allegedly ate strange foods such as porcupines, frogs, bears, and crows. During the Great Lent, their fast was not strict enough: they let women and children eat dairy products on Saturdays and Sundays; they even let sick people eat meat throughout Lent ... (Kolbaba, 2000).

Food served as a marker to describe “otherness.” The Byzantines mocked barbarians for eating in an unrefined manner, foods that the Byzantines disapproved of. The Petchenegs ate horses: “they gorged themselves on the meat, blood and all” (Michael Psellos *Chronographia* 7.69). Latin soldiers were often depicted as gluttons and drunkards. Eustathios of Thessalonike describes the Normans who captured his city in 1185 as gorging themselves on pork and beef seasoned with garlic, and he rejoices that so many died from sickness due to overdrinking and overeating. When Alexis Comnenos reluctantly welcomed Bohemond of Tarento as a crusader, he gave him plenty of cooked food, which the Norman would not touch for fear of being poisoned, and he also gave him raw meat, so that he could cook it the way he wanted (Anna Comnene *Alexiad* X.11). He knew that the Latins cooked their meat differently. Underlying food differences expressed a growing aversion towards the Latins. When Niketas Choniates speaks of the beef-eating Latins, he does not mean it as a compliment (*Histories* Book 9, 594). Food served to create clear-cut boundaries in these examples. On the whole, the Byzantines saw themselves on the side of frugality and order. They drank wine mixed with water and praised abstinence and fasting. Gluttony, seen as a sin and a moral defect, served to condemn the enemies of Byzantium (Garland, 2005). Written sources opposed the avidity of the Latins for food and wine to the sharing of food, which was the duty of all Christians, lay people, clerics, and monks.

Sharing food

Sharing food inside the Christian community, and taking care of the needy outside the community, were two charitable activities praised in the New Testament and in patristic literature (Holman, 2001). One of a bishop’s tasks,

which made him a “*ptochotropheus*” (feeder of the poor), was to attract and channel food offerings and donations in order to feed the poor. Clerical mediation transformed these gifts into a sacrificial offering. Christians were encouraged to give first fruits of wheat, wine, oil, and fruits, and they were told God would bless their fields and bring prosperity to their families (CA II.34.5). We hear of cheese, olives, and wine brought to churches, but the most common food offered was bread. The faithful brought bread and/or wine each week for the celebration of the Eucharist. Only one or two breads were consecrated on the altar, the rest was redistributed, mostly to members of the clergy and as *antidoron*, blessed bread offered at the end of the liturgy. Because it was used in the religious ritual of the Christians, bread had a special place in Byzantine food culture. It was stamped, often with a cross, blessed, and treated as an important food (Galavaris, 1970). Most of the Byzantines did not dare take communion, but enjoyed blessed bread (Caseau, 2009). When in the seventeenth century John Covel travelled in Turkey, he noted this attachment of Greek families to the *antidoron*, which they placed around their children’s necks to protect them (Grémois, 1998, 102).

Originally, these food offerings brought to church had served to organize community meals (the so-called *agape*), which virtually disappeared. In Byzantium, the faithful received food, blessed bread, or fruits for major festivals or on Sundays (Council in Trullo 692). Food gathering now served to feed members of the clergy, the redistribution pattern depending on their rank: “The bishop shall receive four shares, the priest three, the deacon two, and all the others, sub-deacons, readers, cantors, deaconesses, shall receive each one share” (Canons of the Apostles 60). The faithful were no longer the group targeted for food redistribution, not were the poor the first priority. Canon law tried to regulate this evolution: “a bishop shall not be any Sunday without almsgiving. And the poor and orphans shall he know as does a father” (Canons of Athanasius 16). Bishops or monks who did more to feed the destitute than what was expected were considered holy men: John the Almsgiver (†619), bishop of Alexandria, who fed the refugees from Palestine during the Persian invasion, and Shenoute of Atripe (†466), who welcomed lay people inside the protective walls of the White Monastery during an attack of a nomadic people, are two examples. The duty to feed the poor explains why so many monastic foundations were linked to the establishment of a charitable institution. The first task of hospices, hospitals, and *xenodocheia* was to give hot meals, over two or three days, to the poor in need, foreign or not, sick or not (Miller, 1997). Distribution of bread is also explicitly required of monks in many monastic *typika*, which were both foundation documents and monastic rules.

Frugality and monastic influence

Monastic influence was very important over Byzantine society and may

explain the positive attitude of the Byzantines towards frugality. Monastic life was considered the best lifestyle to gain entry to Paradise, the closest to God's recommendations, and many in Byzantine society admired those who led an ascetic life. Monks and nuns chose a life of celibacy, and added privations to it, including not eating meat and sometimes not drinking wine. Monks understood the connection between food and sexual appetite and fasted in order to reduce their sexual drive (Brown, 2008; Shaw, 1998). Monastic literature reveals how to use food abstinence as a weapon against temptation and demons, a knowledge that was not restricted to monastic circles, but which was considered vital to maintain a monk's peace of mind. Monks were quite obsessed with food issues, and they discussed at length what was the right amount of food to ingest: too much food and temptations would follow, too little and despair might come.

Hermits could choose their own custom-made diet, within some common boundaries. They could fast for days in a row, if they felt like it. Their duty to be hospitable and receive fellow monks and visitors led them to break their fast and offer food to their guests. This too was a topic of discussion. On food matters, their guidelines were made of local traditions and comparisons with the regimen of other monks. Monastic literature created a culture of extreme food abstinence as leading to holiness or as a proof of having reached holiness. It is replete with examples of extreme fasting, sometimes to the point of holy anorexia (Caseau, 2003). The Desert Fathers' Sayings present the image of a competition in self-mortification and fasting between monks. Tales of food brought by angels or of monks eating nothing but consecrated bread circulated, with the assumption that these monks (and a few nuns) had managed to transform themselves into angels. They no longer needed food. Archaeology reveals nevertheless that the image derived from the Desert Fathers' Sayings (*Apophthegmata Patrum*) should not be taken at face value. Even in the desert, monastic food was more varied and probably more abundant than that described in the literature. Archaeobotanical studies reveal the presence of a number of crops, which are not cited in the texts, and which would allow monks to live on a quite varied and nutritious diet (Täckholm, 1961; Sauneron, 1972; Harlow & Smith, 2001; W. Smith, 2003; Wipszycka, 2009).

The coenobitic tradition could hardly let each monk and nun choose his or her diet. Coenobitic nuns and monks share their meals in a common refectory at the same time (Talbot, 2007). Compilers of monastic rules hesitated between imposing the same amount of food on everyone and taking into consideration the differences in need for food. Should a child monk be treated in the same way as an adult? Should a novice receive the same food as an experienced monk? A spiritually beneficial story, *diègesis psychopheles*, circulated about the meal served in a community of sisters, who received Daniel of Sketis, a sixth-century desert father, and his disciple. The head of the community, the

higoumene, prepared a meal for the sisters and for her guests: “to the elder she served a bowl containing soaked pulse, raw vegetables, dates and water, and to his disciple boiled lentils, a small piece of bread and watered wine. To the sisters a lot of food was served, fish and wine in abundance.” When Daniel complained about this curious hospitality, she said to him “You are a monk and to you I served a monk’s food. We, however, are novices, and we ate novice’s food” (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* 2101; Dahlman, 2007, 145). As in this story, monastic rules tried to find the right amount of food and the proper types of food for each one to lead a peaceful monastic life. Special dispositions were taken for children and for the sick (Layton, 2002).

For writers of monastic rules, one subject of concern was the degree of freedom granted to each individual monk and nun in asceticism. How much freedom should a monk have not to eat? Monastic rules wished to strike a balance between extreme fasting and indulging in the pleasures of food, because either could be very disruptive to a community. Tensions arose around ascetic figures such as Symeon Stylites the Younger, who was called “*asarkos*” (without flesh) by the other monks, because he ate so little. It mattered for a monastic community to have some common understanding of what was the right amount of effort (*askesis*), in a realistic manner for all to follow. The *typikon* of Gregory Pakourianos condemns both monks who keep food in their cell and eat secretly and those who decide to abstain from food on their own. The twelfth-century *typikon* of the Phoberos monastery also underlines the dangers of both attitudes: “as the fathers say, and we have learned from experience itself, the extremes of each side cause harm equally, both excessive fasting and the filling up of the stomach. [...] For we have learned that some people have not been defeated by gluttony but have been overthrown by immoderate fasting.”

In the middle ages, the social recruitment of monasteries changed, and more aristocratic monks and nuns joined the communities, in their youth or later in life, some of their own free will, others forced to do so. This evolution affected monastic diet, as monks became more demanding and monastic food quality increased in wealthy communities. The monastic reformer Theodore the Stoudite (759–826), himself an aristocrat, writes against monks ranting about the quality of wine served at table. He warns them not to be too demanding, since they have at their disposal white bread made from pure wheat, wine, and oil, not to mention olives and cooked dishes Theodore was against serving an equal amount of food to each monk, and entrusted the head of the community with deciding the amount of bread served to each one, based on the social background of the monk and on the type of work performed for the community. He assumed that it was harder for someone accustomed to a rich table to adjust to a monastic diet than for a peasant used to meager meals (Catechesis 1.50). In Constantinopolitan monasteries, such as the Pantokrator or the Kecharitomene, both Comnenian imperial foundations,

which welcomed high-ranking aristocrats, the rhythm of fasting days and feast days was no different than in any other monastic institution, but some of the monks and nuns had servants at their disposal, and enjoyed a private dining room, where the food served was better than in the common refectory (Thomas, 2000). This inequality led a twelfth-century author to write a *Satire* about two abbots who turned the fast into a feast. While they gorged themselves on shellfish, lobsters, oysters, and shrimps, with mashed broad beans, rice with honey, and numerous fruits, the poor monk, of a low social background, was served an acrid onion broth, with very few vegetables. In fairness, not all monastic institutions allowed such differences in the meals served to monks, but these aristocratic foundations adapted the monastic diet to aristocratic habits and these monks were better fed than poor peasants (Caseau, 2008, 2015). Some *typika* ask the abbot to check that a newcomer does not ask to enter the monastery to escape poverty and the duty to feed his numerous children. What do we know of the diet of the vast majority of the inhabitants?

Was there a Byzantine Cuisine?

Can we define common foods or culinary methods, which would define Byzantine cuisine? Was there a common meal for the vast majority of the inhabitants, who could not afford food imported from afar, even if it was available? Can we know what composed the diet of the poor (Patlagean, 1977)? From different sources, Talmudic and archaeological, it has been possible to reconstruct the food of Palestinian peasants in the early Byzantine period: cereals, vegetables, and fruits, to which one could add dairy products and meat or fish, possibly more regularly than imagined before archaeozoological investigation (Broshi, 2001). The food could hardly taste the same in Palestine, where you could find olive oil, and fruits such as figs and dates, and on the Danube. Should we ask the question again, once the Empire had shrunk after the loss of the West and the Arabic invasions? The area was still wide enough to include regions where olive trees could not grow. The use of olive oil versus animal fat certainly made the food taste different. Soil and climatic conditions of his see in Phrygia made Leo, metropolitan bishop of Synada, complain that he could not get the food he used to get in Constantinople. He describes a land where neither olive trees nor vineyards nor wheat can grow, where one must eat bread made of barley and use dung to heat the oven. At the end of the tenth century, he writes to Emperor Basil II “Our land does not yield wine because of the high altitude and the short growing season” (Leo of Synada Ep. 43).

In spite of these obvious regional differences, the question of a common cuisine has been raised by archaeologists for the period from the seventh–eighth to the tenth–eleventh centuries, because they note a change in cooking wares and try to link it to a change in culinary customs. P. Arthur considers

that there was a Byzantine culinary *koine* identified by the use of chafing dishes from Byzantine Italy to the Crimea and linked to commercial routes inside the Empire. He also distinguishes between two types of pot that he links to certain types of meat: the open type, where it was possible to cook dry or semi-liquid food (such as grain porridge), being predominant in warmer climates, where sheep and goats were frequent, and the closed type, well suited for liquid food, very frequent in northern areas, where pigs and oxen were also frequent (Arthur, 2007). Yet his distribution map mixing cooking jars and faunal remains reveals that most of the Byzantine sites had both types of cooking dish, and the difference is clearly between the two shores of the Mediterranean. So there were indeed two culinary traditions, but the Byzantines fall in between and borrowed from both.

It seems very difficult to define a common Byzantine typical meal for ordinary folk, except in very general terms, admitting that grain and soup or vegetable stews were the basic elements of everyday food (Vroom, 2008). We have two ways for finding out what was considered basic food. We have the *adelphata*, food given yearly and for their lifetime to people who had offered their land to the monastery (Smyrlis, 2006). Per year, the beneficiary of an *adelphaton* received 15–18 *modioi* of wheat (*modios*: 12.8 kg), three *modioi* of legumes, and 25–40 measures of wine (a measure is around 10 l), to which one should add some honey and dried fruits. Altogether this meant a daily diet of 2600–2800 calories. The evaluation of what was necessary to feed a man in order for him to produce hard physical work varies, but this was probably a minimum food regimen (Cheynet, 2005). We also have the poems of the Ptochoprodromos, where a list of foods needed at home, whether one was rich or poor, gives an indication of the diversity of the foods consumed in an urban milieu: no meat or fish is mentioned but many vegetables (celery, leeks, turnips, cabbage, salads, spinach, ...), pulses, and fruits are.

We are better aware of the foods enjoyed by the aristocracy. Gifts of food were exchanged with letters and are often mentioned with some appropriate commentary. The *Satire of the Abbots* provides us not only with a long list of the different foods available in twelfth-century Constantinople, but also with the geographic origins of the best cheeses or wines. It reveals a lot about the aristocratic food culture of the time, its taste for spices, and its enjoyment of a good sauce. Gastronomy was by then a common pastime of the aristocracy, and this is echoed in the literature. The *Satire* reveals some of the ingredients making up a bitter-sweet sauce to go along with certain fish: it included two sorts of nard, cloves, cinnamon, vinegar, and honey. In the numerous novels written during this period, the food served at banquets is described precisely (Jouanno, 1996). Members of the elite enjoyed certain expensive foods, whose appearance on the table set them apart and above the rest of society. This passion for food created a culture of aristocratic banquets, seen as moments of refinement and display of wealth. Spices played an important role

in making dishes expensive and therefore not accessible to the common people (Montanari, 2010). The aristocracy enjoyed adding pepper and cinnamon, nard and cloves to so many dishes, because they were rare and expensive, each adding its qualities and flavor to the food. Members of the elite grew so attached to this way of cooking and to specific foods that they imported them wherever they went. The military elite, for example, brought foods that were not produced locally. While the ordinary soldier had the same hard bread, cooked twice, the emperors expected good food wherever they went, and brought along good wine and oil from Nicaea (Haldon, 2005; Constantine (in Haldon, 1997)). With the increase in trade in the twelfth century, the Constantinopolitan elite could be picky on foods and choose for their table only the best cheeses or wine. Constantinople was definitely a city where large amounts of the productions of the Empire arrived, and it was possible to compare products in such a large marketplace. Trends also played a role in defining what was good and in creating a hierarchy of foods (Demosthenous, 2005). Poems chanted the wonderful products of specific areas and created reputations. The poet John Geometres cites three cities whose lands produced excellent olives, among them Nicaea. The twelfth-century *Satire of the Abbots* mocks this habit and at the same time provides us with information on the excellent wines from Chios, Ganos, Crete, and Samos (Hesseling & Pernot, 1910; Jeanselme & Economos, 1924). The cuisine that was created at banquets was complex and refined. It used the numerous fish of the Bosphorus, for which it invented sauces of different flavors (Dagron, 1995). Birds and game were also in favor. The imperial palace was naturally the place where lavish banquets would be organized. They allowed members of the aristocracy to evaluate how close they were to the emperor, as seating was organized following the rank in the *taktikon*, a hierarchy of dignities and functions, with rules of precedence. Women ate separately and only came for desserts. They too had their *taktikon*, mostly based on whom they had married. Food was expected to be out of the ordinary and it certainly was. The cooks prepared a great variety of foods, in such a way as to procure a mixture of sensations and surprises. Cooks excelled in the art of presenting the food and in fooling people by disguising what they really were: one could confuse a fish and a peacock. Compared with the West, it seems that the Byzantines remained more attached to Roman culinary traditions, even when they had gone out of fashion in Italy. In 968, Liutprand of Cremona came to an imperial banquet at Constantinople, where he was served a goat cooked with garlic, onions, and leeks, to which garum – fish-sauce – had been added, much to his distaste. Garum, considered a delicacy in Roman times, was still appreciated in tenth-century Constantinople, but no longer in the West. In the heated exchange that Liutprand recalls having with emperor Nicephorus Phocas, the emperor had claimed true Romanitas for Byzantium and told Liutprand “You are not Romans, you are Lombards” (Liutprand of Cremona, *Mission to Constantinople*). Court culinary habits had evolved differently in

the East and in the West. Liutprand was nevertheless impressed by the food served, by the dining rooms, and by the gold and silver vessels used. If one were to look for Byzantine cuisine and gastronomy, it is clearly in Constantinople that one would find it, at least until 1204.

FURTHER READING

Traces of food and eating behaviors in the Medieval East can be found in numerous types of ancient source. Here is a short list in alphabetical order of ancient sources cited in this paper: Ammianus Marcellinus *Roman History* 22.12.6 (Rolfe, 1940); medieval satires (Jeanselme & Œconomos, 1924); Anthimus *On the Observance of Food* (Grant, 2007); Apicius (André, 1974); the Barberini Euchologium (Parenti & Velkovska, 2000); Canons of the Apostles (Périer & Périer, 1912, 643–4); Canons of Athanasius (Riedel, 1904, 16); Canons of Shenoute (Layton, 2014) the Codex Theodosianus (Pharr, 1952); Constantine Porphyrogenitus (Haldon, 1997); Daniel of Sketis (Dahlman, 2007); Hierophilos (Romano, 1999); John Covel (Grémois, 1998); Leo of Synada (Vinson, 1985); Monastic Typica (Thomas & Hero, 2000); Symeon Seth (Brunet, 1939); Sophronius (Gascou, 2006); Theodore Prodromos (Hesseling & Pernot, 1910, poem III; Jeanselme & Œconomos, 1924).

CHAPTER 36

Medieval Food¹

Bruno Laurioux

Introduction

Traditionally understood as falling between the end of the Western Roman Empire (476) and the final disappearance of the Byzantine Empire (1453), the period that historians call the “Middle Ages” covers a millennium. Behaviors, norms, and representations of food evolved greatly over such a long period, and today it is no longer thought that there existed a medieval diet, uniform and applicable at all times throughout the medieval West.

The study of the Middle Ages has recently been thoroughly re-problematicized in a fashion similar to that undergone by the history of food in general. Speaking generally, the field has passed from a social and economic approach to the history of food, focusing on issues of supply and rations and firmly rooted in the concerns of the 1950s and 1960s (the growth of the “Thirty Glorious Years” in France (1945–75) and development issues of the Third World), to a cultural history of food, dominant in the 1980s and 1990s and more attentive to issues of sensibility and behavior (Laurioux, 2002). Finally, the turn of the twenty-first century saw the emergence of new themes, such as food security and the environment.

There can be no question of taking stock of a comprehensive bibliography, which has become very consistent. I confine myself here to bringing some questions to the attention of scholars of antiquity to the extent that they can identify elements of continuity and discontinuity between antiquity and the Middle Ages.

New Evidence

When compared to that available for antiquity, documentation of the medieval period seems relatively abundant, although it is very unevenly distributed, both chronologically and typologically. The High Middle Ages (fifth to tenth century) offer relatively few written documents, and they are mostly narrative texts (chronicles and hagiographical texts) that require care in interpretation, and regulations, limited mainly to the monastic world (including the Rule of St Benedict), or, in the case of the Carolingian capitularies, reflecting the expectations of the dominant classes more than the actual production of the dependent classes – which is also the case of the rare polyptychs, inventories, and other land records of the time.

While only scraps from the rich culinary literature of ancient Greece and Rome have survived, medieval scholars are fortunate to have a series of cookbooks from the end of the Middle Ages, over 150 manuscripts, copied from the late twelfth century to the late fifteenth century, and throughout Europe. The rupture with the production of antiquity is evident: indeed, the *De re coquinaria*, collected and placed under the authority of Apicius in the fourth century, was still in use in the fifth to sixth centuries, as evidenced by the *Excerpta* (Excerpts) made by a certain Vinidarius, perhaps in Ostrogothic Italy; the compilation attributed to Apicius continued to be copied thereafter until the Carolingian period in the monasteries of Fulda and Tours, but now as a grammar text, a collection of rare words for lexicographers. The short collections of recipes that we see emerging across Europe in the late Middle Ages owe nothing to Apicius in content or form. Arising in a courtly milieu, *Le Viandier* in France, the *Forme of Cury* in England, the *Libre de Sent Soví* in Catalonia, the *Liber de coquina* in Italy, the *Buch von guter Speise* in Germany, and the *Libellus de arte coquinaria* in Denmark are visibly the work of professionals – cooks, as they sometimes style themselves – writing for other professionals, probably the *maîtres d'hôtel* who would ensure that the dishes were actually made in line with expectations and tastes of their masters. Gradually, and to the degree to which they were diffused in society, these culinary texts were always adapted to the tastes, customs, and means of new audiences.

The other class of documents that contrasts with antiquity are the provisioning accounts, which first appear in the twelfth century in the Iberian Peninsula and England. These multiplied during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the courts of Rome, Aragon, Savoy, and Burgundy produced significant records of accounts, which nevertheless remain underexploited, especially as regards the history of food quality.

Although they are more abundant than in antiquity, these texts tell us mostly about the representations and practices of the highest levels of medieval society. The various disciplines of “food archaeology” can help fill this gap. The study of kitchen equipment, notably ceramics, which can, for the Middle Ages, be crossed with archival investigations and iconographic analysis, has been able to certify the transition, in the thirteenth century, from cooking methods favoring boiling in a large pot to a cuisine that simmered food in small pots. Archaeozoology, which has grown steadily for decades, has seriously undermined the myth of the “pork of the *Ancien Régime*,” by showing that everywhere – including among peasants – it was beef that was the main form of meat. Carpology, for its part, has thrown new light on the path of some plant foods such as buckwheat, whose appearance in Brittany in the fifteenth century seems in fact to have been a reappearance. Used by prehistorians for decades, and more recently by scholars of the ancient world, isotopic analysis has proved to be very promising: in the absence of any other

documentation, it makes it possible to characterize in broad strokes the diet of the dead through examination of bones. Cemeteries may well be the main field of inquiry into the history of the medieval diet in future!

New Context

Food culture cannot be separated from other human phenomena. It has been strongly influenced by the changing political, cultural, social, and environmental characteristics of the medieval millennium. The High Middle Ages were marked by the division of the Mediterranean, once unified under the Roman Empire, into three major political and religious areas, which would roughly remain until the fifteenth century: the Byzantine Empire, Islam, and the Latin West. To what degree did this long-term arrangement influence the eating style of the Latin West? Today we no longer believe, for example, that the intensive use of spices in the medieval diet was due to the influence of the cookery practiced in the Muslim world (Freedman, 2008) and, in general, the influence of the Muslim world over the food of the Latin world – that is, with regard to recipes, techniques, and products – remained low, if we except contact zones such as the Iberian Peninsula or Sicily.

On the other hand, the Western Roman Empire disintegrated in the fifth century, to the benefit of “barbarian” kingdoms, who brought with them, *a priori*, a different food culture from that which predominated among the “Romans.” However, the political fragmentation of the West did not stop there: the feudalism of the tenth and eleventh centuries and the emergence of the Italian communes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries surely contributed to a “food localism” favorable to the emergence of regional, or even local, identities in this respect. Finally, the political phenomenon that historians call “the genesis of the modern state,” characterized by the appearance in France, England, and Spain, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, of strong monarchies relying on an administrative service, taxation, and representative institutions, may have contributed, in turn, to the definition of “national” food identities.

Beginning in the Late Empire, the movement of social ruralization accelerated in the early Middle Ages. The aristocracy now lived in the countryside, in large estates that aspired to self-sufficiency – although the need for commercial transactions never disappeared, as in the case of large-scale trade with the East in products such as spices. Overall, early medieval society seems simpler than that of late Antiquity: the disappearance of the middle class that filled the offices of municipal and central governments left a smaller, but also stronger, class of the powerful (*potentes*) face to face with an even larger and poorer class of the impoverished (*pauperes*).

The food supply of the latter was heavily dependent on resources obtained from nature, which in turn depended heavily on large-scale environmental events and climatic cycles. The first centuries of the Middle Ages are thus marked by a general decline in cultivated area, which was also the cause of a major population decline: for those who managed to survive the “Justinian plague” of the sixth century or the famines that struck until the Carolingian period, the vast fallow areas (*incultum*) provided important opportunities for hunting and gathering, allowing for diversification of food supply. From the eleventh century onwards, however, diets tended toward homogenization around a grain model: the “great clearances” allowed the establishment of grain farming in marshy or mountainous areas and the feeding of a fast-growing population. But from the late thirteenth century, this model of near monoculture was showing its limitations, and did not withstand the epidemics, famines, and scarcities of the fourteenth century; the new equilibrium reached in the late Middle Ages was again supportive of diversity of food, to the extent that large areas were now devoted to farming. Thus the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appear as “carnivorous” centuries, meat consumption reaching levels not again found in the West until the nineteenth century.

The food environment of medieval populations was also transformed by the limited introduction of new plant and animal species, coming mainly from the Mediterranean. Besides the eggplant, sugarcane deserves particular mention, spread throughout the Muslim world including Sicily and the Iberian Peninsula from the first millennium, but implanted permanently in the West from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to meet the growing consumer preference for sugar, whether for use in cooking or in confectionery accompanying meals.

Transitions

For the High Middle Ages, the main question that arises is the contribution of “barbarians” to the changes in eating habits. Massimo Montanari has suggested that the medieval diet was born from the synthesis of two models, one based on the Roman triad of bread, wine, and oil, and the other Germanic, based on meat, beer, and dairy products: the result was a new, typically medieval triad, in the Carolingian period, combining bread, wine, and meat (Montanari, 1988). This simplified description does not take account of the regional differences which are evident – for example the importance of beer consumption in Atlantic Europe, or the complex spatial distribution of dietary fats (Weiss Adamson, 2002). It also ignores the fact that, in food as in other cultural fields, the Germanic “peoples” around which the barbarian kingdoms were built had already become used to the Roman style of food before they had crossed the *limes*. For its part, the Germanic feast, where one sat in a large “hall” and imbibed large quantities of intoxicating liquor, competed with and helped eliminate the ancient *convivium* upon the *stibadium* (Gautier, 2006).

The transition from reclining to sitting at the banquet may have shifted the culinary and gastronomic center of gravity away from dumplings and other minced or stuffed items to large pieces of roasted meat that diners could now handle and cut with much more ease – and this despite the requirements of the Greek physician Anthimus, author of an early sixth-century dietary treatise dedicated to the Frankish King Thierry I, in which he strongly advised the boiling of meat. Much ink has been spilled about this treatise, which is known only from later copies: it has been assumed that its author had been sent as ambassador to the Franks either by the Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great, or by the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius, with no really convincing arguments on either side.

While the “barbarian” kings settled in the West showed great reverence for all the marks of ancient culture, the cuisine practiced in their courts gradually moved away from that which the collection of Apicius still recorded, in the extracts copied in the sixth to seventh centuries. Thus, *garum* gradually disappeared from Western human consumption: to take one example, it no longer appears, from the ninth century onward, in the royal acts guaranteeing the supply of products of large-scale trade to the monastery of Corbie. The fact that medical recipes still mention it cannot be claimed to disprove this, since these recipes often blindly copy much older models. However, the use of *garum* continued in the Byzantine East, which contributed to the disgust which Liutprand of Cremona, ambassador of Emperor Otto II in the late tenth century, manifested toward Byzantine dining customs. The stock of culinary spices, the taste for which was inherited from the ancient elites, evolved and greatly expanded: the substitute for *silphium*, the *laser* of Asia, faded away in turn, while ginger and cinnamon, little used in Antiquity, came to compete with pepper. During the Middle Ages other spices in turn arrive in Western European markets: cloves, nutmeg, and galangal (Lauriou, 2005).

In other words, the medieval style was born gradually, from successive evolutions and ruptures, in which internal factors probably played a much more important role than external factors. From this perspective, the role of the Crusades appears to have been limited to making contact with sugar, which spread in culinary use through the influence of a medical science that had been transformed through the translation of Arabic treatises.

Christianity and Food

Christianity was a common denominator for the Latin West – if we set aside the many Jewish communities dotted here and there, and some Muslim communities temporarily present in Sicily or the Iberian Peninsula. Did Christianity also play an integral role in the realm of food? In other words, was there a specifically Christian food?

The influence of the medieval Church on dietary practices should not be

exaggerated. We must distinguish, from this perspective, the theoretically moderate constraints placed upon the faithful from the more stringent standards imposed on the clergy, and specific behaviors dictated by certain religious positions considered heretical.

In the Middle Ages, the faithful benefited from the gradual disappearance of the last food taboos that early Christianity had inherited from Judaism. While distancing certain Irish rites or the evangelizing of the eighth-century Germanic populations very occasionally led to bans on eating horse or reactivated the interdiction on eating hare, we see the prohibition of eating meat considered “bloody,” meaning in particular meat from animals not slaughtered by cutting the throat, disappear (see Caseau in this volume). This choice, notably affirmed during the conversion of the Bulgarians in the ninth century, was itself one of the grounds of contention between Eastern and Western Christians.

On the other hand, the medieval Church, for penance, imposed on the faithful a series of dietary privations, that canon law considers together under the term *ieiunium* (it originally consisted in refraining from all eating during the course of the day). According to a chronology that still remains somewhat unclear, the required abstinence was displaced from food intake properly so-called to the consumption of specific foods. Thus, one or two days a week (Friday and often on Saturday), on the eve of every major religious holiday, and during the long weeks preceding Easter (Lent), the faithful were asked not to eat meat, and possibly any food of animal origin – such as butter or dairy, or eggs. Note however that this rule has many exceptions: all people in a weakened state were exempted – pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and the sick – as well as heavy workers, whose needs had to be met. In all cases, local authorities were encouraged to adapt the rule to local customs. The fact remains that this requirement would have a profound influence on Western diet until the sixteenth century – it became one of the themes of the Reformation – creating a tension that expressed itself during the carnival, and maintaining strong fishing activity and fish conservation, on grounds entirely different from what had prevailed in antiquity.

The Church expected even more of her own servants. First the clerics, which the Gregorian reform sought to distinguish from the laity, were allotted additional days of deprivation: during Advent preceding Christmas, every Wednesday, and from the Sunday leading up to Ash Wednesday. Though less austere than the Eastern rules, the rule of St Benedict, which gradually imposed itself on Western monasticism, requires the preparation and collective consumption of meals, which are taken late (not until the ninth hour of the day, and not before Vespers during Lent) and consist mainly of bread and fresh or dried vegetables. These requirements of course inspired instances of resistance, use of loopholes, and coping strategies from the monks. The time of the main meal was gradually brought forward to midday, and the daily

ration was greatly enriched, from the Carolingian period, by generous distributions of eggs and fish. Debates arose around certain animals such as chicken, goose, and beaver, whose classification as meat was contested.

If deprivation of meat is thus revealed as a major issue, this is because this food was highly valued in the aristocratic diet and seen as a symbol of strength and power. Medicine in this case came to the rescue of social order, in describing meat as particularly hot in the dietary system inherited from antiquity. This is precisely what made it a danger to monks, for whom a cold dish such as fish was indicated. Here we touch on cultural representations, often drawn from ancient authorities, which may support or, conversely, contradict religious prescriptions.

Heritage

In some ways, the Middle Ages played a role of transmitter in food, for example in passing on the principles of humoral dietetics, as they were developed by the Greek physicians of antiquity and modified by Arabic medicine. The Middle Ages also introduced the alternation between “fat” days and “lean” days that would structure the European diet for centuries.

Various indices also suggest that national styles of food consumption were defined at that time, genuine preferences and even regional identities surrounding production and preparation (Lauriou, 2005). These features would endure long after the medieval cuisine truly passed away, in the early seventeenth century.

FURTHER READING

The chapters on food history in the Middle Ages in the collective volume edited by J.-L. Flandrin & M. Montanari (1996 in French; 1999 in English) give an up-to-date overview of the topic for the 1990s. More recent overviews can be found in the work of Collin-Bouffier & Lauriou (2008) and Gautier & Grieco (2012). Spices play an important part in the medieval food culture. On this topic, the most up-to-date work is that by P. Freedman (2008). The volume edited by M. Weiss Adamson (2002) gives a sense of the great diversity of ingredients and dishes in the Medieval West. On this topic, see also Freedman (2007) and Woolgar (2007). On the latest methodologies, especially related to archaeology, see Woolgar, Serjeantson, & Waldron (2006).

NOTE

¹ Translated by Nicholas Banner.

CHAPTER 37

Food in Antiquity: the Islamic Dimension

David Waines

Introduction

Within the century following the death in Medina of the Prophet Muhammad in 632, the political and religious contours of the Middle East had begun a process of irreversible transformation. The government of the emergent empire in Damascus declared Arabic the official language (685) throughout the recently conquered domains of Syria, Iraq, and Persia to the east and Egypt and North Africa to the west. However, the religious faith of the forces that had surged out of the Arabian Peninsula after 632 spread only gradually. An Arab-Muslim elite governed indigenous populations of Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and others for several generations before any majority Muslim society within these lands had begun to develop. Nonetheless, both emerging Muslim society and Islam alike resulted from the increasing symbiosis between the conquerors and the original inhabitants ensuring that no sharp social break with the immediate past occurred; disparate regions were, therefore, able to retain much of their traditional character. This was especially the case with food and culinary traditions.

The Arab conquerors' traditional food culture is difficult to reconstruct in much detail. The tenth-century traveler and geographer al-Muqaddasi (d. ca. 1000) laconically observed that the inhabitants of central Arabia were both "frugal and emaciated, so little nourished are they by food." Charles Doughty similarly noted in his nineteenth-century travel account, *Arabia Deserta*, that the "Arab can live for long months so slenderly nourished that it seems to us they endure without food." These observations, expressed nearly a millennium apart, should not be taken to imply that conditions had remained static throughout; rather, early Arabic sources reflect the community's memory that food resources in the Prophet's lifetime had been one of relative scarcity. In an early tradition (*hadith*) attributed to the Prophet the Hijaz region of Arabia is described as a land afflicted by hunger, and in another *hadith* the Prophet's wife, A'isha, is reported saying that "sometimes a month would come in which they did not kindle a fire [for cooking] having only dates and water." Scarcity made a virtue of moderation in both food consumption and as a goal of the moral life: "Two people's food is enough for three and three enough for four" is a refrain repeated in the *hadith* sources. Muslim scripture, the Qur'an (*sura* 90:14–16) expresses the moral goal of life

in several ways, but forcefully describing the faithful as those who would “feed on a day of starvation (*masghaba*) an orphan among relatives or a needy man in desolation”.

Even Doughty, however, remarked that in his time the Bedouin was seldom reduced to a famine diet of locusts. Moreover, he noted the skill of the Arab housewife in being able to “make savory messes of any grain, seething it and putting thereto only a little salt and clarified butter.” Salt was the key ingredient in the pot, which the Prophet himself described as “the Lord of condiments.” In this context, the development of early Islamic dietary law may illustrate the jurists’ perceived distinction between the Muslim Arabian heartland, centered upon the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and the post-conquest territories of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. A more inclusive and lenient attitude toward what was permitted for consumption was found in Maliki legal practice that originated in the Hijaz, where the nagging reality of scarcity and hunger were fresh in the memory. Thus the lizard and the hare were accepted as food while rejected by other Islamic legal schools of law; Malikis also accepted birds of prey for consumption while beasts of prey were merely disapproved, whereas both categories were prohibited by jurists of the other three schools. These more restrictive tendencies, found among Iraqi and Egyptian legal circles, were expressed in regions of more richly cultivated spaces, urban trade, and political power. These regions were the Muslims’ inheritance by conquest, which they transformed in certain ways but were in turn themselves transformed in other ways.

Food in Medieval Arabic Sources

The two fundamental sources of the Islamic religion, already alluded to, are the sacred scripture of the Qur’an and the traditions (*hadith*) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Where matters of food are concerned, the Qur’an offers the succinct injunctions to “Eat from the provision of your Lord and give Him thanks” (Q 34:15) and “Eat of the good things (*tayyibat*) We have provided you” (Q 2:57), where *tayyibat* might be interpreted as referring to nourishing sustenance in general or specifically to legally permitted foods in the religious sense. Food taboos are also succinctly summarized (Q 5:3), where stress is placed on the proper slaughter of animals “in the name of God”; animals sacrificed on pagan altars are therefore forbidden meat. By the ninth century, collections of traditions were being compiled by experts in the genre. Of the six collections that finally achieved canonical status, the two best known were composed by al-Bukhari (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875). In this extensive literature, the Prophet’s reported sayings and actions were employed by religious scholars to elucidate, interpret, and extend the meaning of Qur’anic passages. Sections on food and drink are commonly found in these collections, and a separate section on hunting would describe how game may be legally caught for consumption. A food taboo not mentioned in the Qur’an

is described in a *hadith* where the Prophet explicitly prohibited the flesh of the domestic ass, although he partook of the flesh of a wild ass (providing it had been ritually slaughtered “in the name of God”). On another occasion he declared he neither ate nor prohibited eating lizards, leaving the believer to decide whether to indulge or abstain.

The Prophetic era had ended in 632. The traditional year from which the Islamic calendar is dated, however, was exactly a decade earlier; Muhammad and a small group of his companions had fled Meccan hostility to settle in the greater safety of Medina (622), where the nascent community was founded. During the first three centuries (until the early tenth century AD) an urban centered, commercially vibrant civilization had emerged and flourished under the banner of Islam stretching from the Iberian Peninsula to the Indus valley. While there were cities constructed by Muslims, such as Basra, Baghdad, Fustat (old Cairo), and Qayrawan, the Arabs of the desert oases had inherited others such as Damascus, Nishapur, and Kabul, together with vast agricultural lands of great river systems of the Nile, the Tigris–Euphrates, and the Indus and extensive irrigation networks in Persia and the Spanish Levant. Not only had access to greater food resources now been secured, but also an interest in food matters was expressed in a variety of new forms of Arabic literature that appealed to the new urban and urbane bourgeois readers of Arabic, whatever their religious affiliation.

One such work, the *Choice Histories*, was by the theologian and man of letters Ibn Qutayba, who died in Baghdad in 889. A literary treasury in ten sections each devoted to a separate theme such as sovereignty, asceticism, and women, it contains a lengthy chapter on food (*al-ta’am*). Another more elaborate encyclopedia of useful information for the well informed was that of Ibn Abd Rabbihi (d. 940) of Cordoba. Entitled *The Unique Necklace*, one of its 25 sections deals with food and drink (*al-ta’am wa’l sharab*), the complete work also enjoying widespread popularity in the Muslim east. Important for our later discussion, this lengthy section provides a good summary of humoral pathology inherited from classical Greek sources. Further subdivisions cover nourishment appropriate to different bodily temperaments, the times of eating, the relation of movement and sleep to diet, heavy, moderate, and light types of foods, hot and cold, moist and dry dishes, and so forth. These subsections, in short, are a popular presentation of dietetics dealt with by physicians. To Hippocrates is attributed the saying that also reflected the Muslim attitude of moderation already noted, “I eat to live while others live to eat.”

From the Iberian Peninsula (known in the Arabic sources as al-Andalus) there also emerged compositions of a quite different order, where the subject of food was related to treatises on agriculture. Written mainly between the tenth and thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, these works illustrate the relationship between the Muslim conquerors and the indigenous Christian and Jewish communities, which themselves had embraced influences from the Classical

World. Around 948 a richly illustrated copy of the Greek physician Dioscorides' (flourished ca. 60) most famous work, *On Medicinal Substances*, was sent as a gift by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII to the Umayyad Caliph of Cordoba Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir (r. 912–61). A monk was later dispatched to Cordoba to help a team of Muslim and Jewish scholars work with an earlier translation into Arabic made in ninth-century Baghdad. The Emperor's gift copy was employed to adapt the Greek terminology of the original to the Arabic usage in Muslim Spain. This labor influenced the development of writing on and practice of pharmacology, botany, and by extension an "agricultural revolution" in al-Andalus. The eleventh century witnessed the production of the most important nucleus of treatises on agriculture (Arabic: *filaha*). They might better be described as encyclopedias of the rural economy, inasmuch as they covered, in addition to agronomy, arboriculture, horticulture, floriculture, zootechny (including bee keeping), veterinary practices, and farm management. Only a selection can be mentioned here. Two authors were famous physicians, al-Zahrawi (d. 1013), to whom is attributed a compendium on agronomy, and Ibn Wafid (d. 1075), who created a botanical garden for the ruler of Toledo and likewise penned an agricultural treatise. Such gardens, made for pleasure, experiment, and acclimatization of plants, were the first to be established on the European continent. Ibn Bassal (d. 1105) was exclusively an agronomist, and his surviving work is unusual in that he cites no earlier specialists but rather appears to rely solely on his own personal experience, based upon extensive travels and also by his creating a royal garden for the ruler of Seville. By contrast, Ibn Hajjaj's treatise composed in 1073 is a mosaic of citations from ancient authors along with his own measured comments and judgments. The earliest agricultural treatise to appear in Arabic, however, was the vast compilation translated from Syriac around 900 in Iraq by one Ibn Wahshiyya, probably a Christian convert. Known as *Nabataean Agriculture*, it was, in effect, the product of successive revisions from antiquity through the Hellenistic era of scientific material and popular superstitions of the Nabataeans; it was known to writers in western regions, including al-Andalus.

Different again are works that reflect a strictly urban rather than rural setting, namely, the market inspector's manual. In these texts food is treated from a both a moral, juridical, and an administrative perspective rather than from that of its production for sale. The moral dimension is based upon the Qur'an injunction "Believers, men and women, are friends to one another; *they command right and forbid wrong*" (Q 9:71; also 3:104, 110), a phrase reiterated in the inspector's manual. The task of the inspector (*muhtasib*) was to act as controller of the market within a wider, primarily religious, duty of maintaining order in the social life of the city. The manuals list the main market trades, and instruct the inspector in methods of testing the quality of the products and identifying malpractice among traders. One of the more detailed manuals is that of the Egyptian Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (d. 1329), who lists

among the separate food merchants flour sellers and millers, bakers and bread makers, sellers of roast meat, sellers of liver and appetizers, sausage makers, butchers, vendors of cooked (animal) heads, pickled meat sellers, milk sellers, fish-fryers, vendors of *harisa* (a porridge-like dish made of cereal, meat, and spices), makers of *zulabiya* (a kind of fritter), and pressers of olive and sesame oil. Similar lists are found in other manuals of western and eastern provenance.

Unsurprisingly, juridical texts touch upon food matters in a number of contexts, some related to obligatory Muslim rituals such as alms giving, fasting, and pilgrimage, but also in the giving of wedding feasts, where, in a fourteenth-century legal manual, it is stated that the meal should include sheep or goat, although it was permitted to serve whatever food was readily available. The famous multi-volume classic of religious thought and practice called *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, written by the jurist-philosopher-theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d.1111), contains a whole section on the etiquette of eating (*adab al-'akl*). The later *Book of Basics* by the fourteenth-century jurist Ibn al-Hajj has a similar account. Etiquette in al-Ghazali's terms covered the sequence of invitation to a meal, its acceptance, followed by one's presence, the serving of food, eating, and finally taking leave of one's host. In a broader sense, al-Ghazali is describing the fundamental ethic of hospitality in Muslim society, reflected in the Prophet's own life and probably derived from pre-Islamic Arab values. When the Prophet was once asked to describe the essence of faith, he replied, "Offering food and extending a greeting of peace," that is, a sincere welcome to one's table. Yet al-Ghazali was careful to link the spirit of this ethic to the cautionary view that mankind's greatest moral peril lay in the desire of the stomach; as a source of temptation it ranked as even more dangerous than sexual desire. Satiety after a meal aroused the passions and stimulated bodily ailments; an unhealthy body in turn impeded one's acquiring the proper knowledge of God's guidance and hence the performance of the proper deeds that knowledge entailed. A healthy body, on the other hand, was achieved by eating in moderation and preferably in the company of others, following the Prophet's example that "the best food is that over which there are many hands." Tension may appear to lurk between the norms of hospitality and moderation, if not contradiction; nonetheless, it serves to remind us of the close relationship in medieval Muslim thought between nourishment and health, already briefly mentioned above.

Writings on Nourishment and Health

The Muslim conquests left Arabs the inheritors of the Hellenized regions of the Middle East that had resulted from the conquests of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BC). Two major indigenous cultural and linguistic groups, the Aramaic and Persian, gradually assimilated the pagan presence of Hellenism. In the process, translations from Greek into Syriac and Pahlavi (Middle

Persian) had already appeared in the century before the Arabs established their new political order, bringing with it yet another language with pretensions to universality. Indeed, the demands of daily intercourse made the adoption of Arabic inevitable. With the advent of the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad (from 750) a translation movement commenced, initiated by the Caliphal court before commissions were subsequently sponsored as well within wider bourgeois circles. Translations from the Greek via Syriac and Pahlavi into Arabic covered many subjects, but for present purposes only those that discuss health and nourishment can be briefly highlighted.

Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d. 873) has been described as the most important mediator of ancient Greek science to the Arabs. Born into a Nestorian Christian family in southern Iraq, he was probably bilingual in Syriac and Arabic. He studied medicine under the Abbasid court physician in Baghdad, Yuhanna ibn Masawayh (d. 857), also a Nestorian, before venturing into translating from the Greek with his son and nephew; he himself claimed to have rendered into Syriac or Arabic more than a hundred works of Galen (d. ca. 199), while his “school” led all others in their translations of Hippocrates. He was also involved in amending the first translation of Dioscorides’ *Of Medicinal Substances*. One of his many original and influential works was entitled *Questions on Medicine*. Significantly, Hunayn and his teacher Ibn Masawayh are each credited with a work on nourishment or dietetics (*al-aghdhīya*). Somewhat later, special works on dietetics were written by, among others, the famous physician-clinician and philosopher Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 925 or 932), known in Europe as Rhazes, and his contemporary, Ishaq b. Sulayman al-Isra’ili (d. ca. 935), an oculist turned court physician in Qayrawan, Tunisia. The title of al-Razi’s book conveys its objective clearly: *The Book of Nourishment’s Benefits and the Warding off of its Harmful Effects*. Among the many classes of food dealt with are meats and their various parts, fish, cooked and cold dishes, milk, condiments, eggs, herbs and spices, fruits and vegetables. The famous Andalusī polymath Abd al-Malik Ibn Zuhri (d. 1162) also wrote on dietetics, his book modestly adopting the more usual title *Book of Nourishment*.

These works reflect the major explanatory medical principle of Greek humoral pathology. Everything, including food and drink, is composed of four elements – fire, earth, air, and water – together with their corresponding primary qualities, hot, cold, dry, and wet. In humans, as food and drink are digested, or literally “cooked” (*matbukh*), they are transformed into different substances resulting in the four humors, blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. A healthy body (temperament) implied a balanced mixture of the primary qualities inherent in the humors. Thus yellow bile is hot and dry like the element fire. No one’s body, however, was in perfect equilibrium. An excess or deficit of one of the humors was deemed harmful and required a counterbalance of qualitative opposition achieved chiefly through diet to

restore the body to health. Substances, chiefly vegetable, administered as drugs operated in a similar manner, and were dealt with in works on *materia medica* and pharmacology. Food and drink was one of the so-called “six non-naturals” that could assist in the restoration of health. These were factors external to the body over which a person had some control; they included the surrounding air, sleeping and waking, exercise and rest, retention and evacuation, and mental states.

There was another approach to health and nourishment that began about the time the translation movement commenced. Although influenced by humoral pathology, the alternative path better represented the values of an emerging Muslim civilization and became known as Prophetic Medicine. The first extant material of this nature was gathered and included in a work called simply a *Compendium on Medicine*. Written by a jurist of the religious law rather than a physician, Abd al-Malik ibn Habib was born in al-Andalus around 790 and set off to fulfill his religious duty of pilgrimage to Mecca around 823–4. He returned three years later, having spent time meeting scholars in Egypt as well as the holy places. He died in 853. His *Compendium* is divided into three parts, the first two of roughly equal length dealing with Prophetic medicine (*al-tibb al-nabawi*) and humoral pathology; the third very short part deals with magic. The curative powers of certain food stuffs, dates, honey, olive oil, salt, garlic, and milk are mentioned in part one, which contains sayings attributed to the Prophet that reflect traditional Arab practices. The Prophet is recorded saying, for example, “Put salt in all your food as it is a remedy against seventy-two illnesses including madness, elephantiasis, toothache, sore throat and stomach ache.” In part two the author himself briefly describes humoral pathology, then mentions the beneficial uses of foodstuffs such as wheat, barley, fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, eggs, milk, butter, and olive oil within this system. He is careful to note however that, when health is achieved or maintained and illness avoided, it is only with God’s permission. Later works on Prophetic medicine, for example the *Medicine of the Prophet* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya (d. 1350), who was well read in humoral pathology, were written to reconcile Arab traditions and prophetic sayings with ideas and terminology of the Greek system, while leaving the almighty as the ultimate provider of cures.

Culinary Manuals

The foregoing, necessarily compacted, discussion leads us now to consider the Arabic cookbook. The few extant manuscripts that have come to light, edited and published since the 1930s, belong to the period from roughly the tenth to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, the thirteenth century seemingly the most productive. Collectively, they preserve many hundreds of recipes, broadly mirroring the tastes of urban court and bourgeois circles stretching from Iraq westward through to North Africa and al-Andalus. The earliest culinary works

in Arabic, however, date from the first half of ninth-century Iraq but are not extant. Fewer than a hundred recipes attributed to their authors are found in the first major extant cookbook, simply titled *The Cookbook* (*Kitab al-tabikh*), which belongs to the end of the tenth century. It was written by one Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq, about whom nothing is known save his name, which suggests he was a stationer, copyist, bookseller, or possibly all three. The names of nearly a dozen authors or compilers of cookbooks from this earliest group are mentioned, who were, curiously, exclusively prominent figures at the Abbasid court in Baghdad, including several Caliphs, the court physician Ibn Masawayh, mentioned above, an astrologer and possibly a professional court chef, and others. The most famous of this group was the prince Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi (d. 839), younger half-brother of the renowned Caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 809). Some of the recipes attributed to Ibn al-Mahdi are expressed in poetic form; some dishes, named after him, appeared in other cookbooks.

The Cookbook will occupy our attention in more detail below but it is worth noting here that it displays influences of Persian culture in the names of certain dishes and ingredients used. Moreover, two of the cookbook contributors, also associated with the Caliphal court, are Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki (d. 805), from a Persian Buddhist family before their conversion to Islam, and the poet Ibrahim ibn Abbas al-Suli (d. 857), of Persianized Turkish origin. Al-Warraq added much more material independently of these sources, and thereby contributed to “fixing” the beginnings of a literary culinary tradition by bringing together a representative sample from information, largely oral, available to him.

There then appears a hiatus in the extant literary tradition of over two centuries during which neither cookbook titles nor authors’ names are known. The next work from the eastern group of Arabic cookbooks that has been both edited and translated is by the Iraqi Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Baghdadi, whose autograph copy is dated 1226. Another thirteenth-century work, composed in Syria, has been attributed to Ibn al-Adim (d. 1262) by its modern editors. A manuscript dated 1373, entitled a *Description of Everyday Foods*, lacks the name of its author. Finally, among this group is *The Treasury of Benefits in the Variety of Tables Covered with Food*, whose compiler is unknown; its provenance and period may, with uncertainty, be assigned to the Egyptian Bahri Mamluk period (roughly 1260–1380).

From the western Islamic domains, representing the Maghribi–Andalusian high culinary tradition, are two thirteenth-century cookbooks, *The Excellences of the Table with Pleasant Food and Dishes* attributed to one Ibn Razin al-Tujibi and the anonymous, untitled manuscript published in an Arabic edition and Spanish translation as *La Cocina Hispano–Magrebi durante la Epoca Almohade*. The compilers of both these cookbooks were aware of the early Eastern cuisine, and of the few recipes identified as such included a handful from Ibn al-Mahdi called simply ‘Ibrahimiyya’. Al-Tujibi, who was of Berber

ethnic origin, has several dishes made from finely ground wheat called semolina made into *couscous*, reputedly the Berber national dish.

The above survey has dealt with a broad range of subject areas where food for consumption had been treated from many perspectives by medieval authors in Arabic works written across the Islamic domains down to the fourteenth century: food for production, purchase in the market, as literary instruction for the leisure class of its benefits, as a goal of the Muslim's moral life, as a branch of secular medicine and its Prophetic counterpart, and finally as preparation for the daily table. These works, disparate in treatment yet convergent upon the subject of food, are the remarkable product of an emergent Islamic civilization forged from a vibrant symbiotic relationship between conquerors and conquered. In the final section of this essay, attention will focus upon al-Warraq's *Cookbook* or, as it might be described in modern marketing terms, *A Cook's Guide to a Regime of Sustainable Health*. Nonetheless, it is indisputably the earliest extant culinary manual of this new era of Middle Eastern history.

The Cookbook

In the introduction, al-Warraq addresses his anonymous patron, saying "You asked me to compile a book on dishes prepared for kings, Caliphs, lords and dignitaries ... and so, here is a fine collection of them both *to benefit the body and ward off any harm that may afflict it*." These last words echo the title of al-Razi's earlier book on dietetics, indicating that al-Warraq had incorporated humoral theory into his world of culinary delights. His was the first and only Arabic cookbook where the theory was applied so systematically. While later writers were undoubtedly aware of it, they either applied it more casually or did not refer to it at all. Indeed, al-Warraq's is perhaps the first surviving work to combine the knowledge of physician and cook (a Hippocratic notion) within a totally novel multi-ethnic-cultural-religious setting.

Of the book's 132 chapters, the first 30 deal with kitchen hygiene and utensils, seasonings (broadly defined) used in cooking, the eight tastes of food purportedly taken from Galen's *Book of Familiar Foodstuffs*, then mention of food for the young and the elderly. This is followed by discussion of the humoral "strengths" of various foodstuffs such as meat, fish, poultry, grains, seasonal vegetables, oils (olive, sesame, almond, pistachio), spices, fruits, condiments, and sauces. For example, vegetables used in preparing many dishes include the leek, described as "hot and dry that stimulates the appetite but causes headaches and nightmares," while lettuce is said to be "cold with a soothing and cooling effect on a hot stomach; it depresses coitus and induces sleepiness." Recipes for making breads or vinegar are also found in these sections.

Al-Warraq then presents his selection of several hundred recipes for hot and

cold main and side dishes, sweetmeats, and beverages (licit and illicit, i.e. alcoholic), which he assured his patron represented the “authentic cooking” of his day. Judging from the names of many dishes they were of Persian origin: *zirqaj*, *sikbaj*, *isfidhbaja* (descriptive terms), *Kisrawiyya* (named after a Persian king, Khusraw), *Sughdiyya* (named after Sughd, a Persian city). Others belonged to the Arab tradition, such as *sawiq*, *tharid*, *asida*, *madira*, *Hashimiyya* (named after an ancestor of the Prophet), and likely also *jazuriyya* (made with camel meat); other dishes can be identified with Iraq and Syria.

The great majority of recipes are for meat dishes, even ones explicitly named as vegetable (*baqliyya*) preparations. One such contains the roots of chard and white leeks equal in quantity to the meat, plus onion, chickpeas, coriander and cumin seeds, cheese, and chopped olives, and finally with eggs, more cheese, and almonds mixed together and added to the cooking meat and vegetables. The recipe ends with the expression meaning it will be good “If God wills it so” (*in sha’llah*). Meat (*lahm*), when unspecified in a recipe, would generally be understood to mean lamb, the cook’s favorite and recommended as most nourishing by experts in both humoral and Prophetic medicine; on the other hand, the unspecified term could also mean whatever other meat was preferred or readily available. Three examples from the *Cookbook* must suffice.

In other words, meat substitution was commonplace. According to an anecdote related by al-Warraq, a dish called *tabahija* was made with gazelle meat which had been hunted and killed by the Persian Sassanian king Bahram (d. 438), the dish – as prepared by his two companions – originating at that moment. Of the 11 other *tabahija* dishes mentioned in the chapter, it was made also with fattened kid, yearling lamb, or young fowls. One recipe, called “the mother of all *tabahija* dishes,” allowed a lamb preparation to be served in three equal portions and in sequence, each bearing its own distinctive flavor as a further key ingredient was added to the original dish in stage two (vinegar) and three (a garnish of rue).

Tharid was a traditional Arab favorite, famously compared by the Prophet Muhammad to be as excellent a food as his wife A’isha was over other women. Ibn Qayyim described *tharid* in his *Medicine of the Prophet* as a thick soup based on bread and meat. In al-Warraq’s *Cookbook*, dishes for the urban palate have been dramatically transformed into more lavish and expensive plates. The first of his dozen *tharid* recipes calls for lamb and chicken, or either meat alone, chopped into medium pieces and cooked in a stock of truffles soaked overnight with chickpeas and seasoned with salt. A bundle of fresh rue, leeks, and coriander, tied together, is added to the pot with ground coriander seeds, cumin, caraway, and black pepper. Cooking continues until the meat is done. Fine bread is crumbled (*tharada*) into a large bowl, submerged by enough truffle broth to cover it with the meat pieces added on top, and garnished with small sausages and thin meat patties. This kind of transformation of simple traditional Arab dishes into urban banquet fare

occurred in others as well.

Finally, dishes with curative properties are explicitly meatless and called *muzawwarat* or “counterfeit” because they resemble original meat versions. Al-Warraq notes that these dishes were used by Christians during Lent when abstinence from meat was a religious obligation. A total of seven chapters are dedicated to an extension of the idea of “abstinence” to vegetarian dishes for health reasons. They are remedies for a range of conditions: primarily fevers but also an excess of yellow bile, dizziness, diarrhea, pleurisy, and liver ailments.

To conclude briefly, al-Warraq’s *Cookbook* stands as a remarkably rich symbol of the underlying theme of this essay: that writings on food surveyed here in its broadest sense characterized a new historic era that had transformed the geographical zones stretching from the Iberian Peninsula to India between the seventh and fourteenth centuries, that is, transformed by the dynamic interaction between the long-established indigenous cultures of these areas and their conquest by Arabs from the peninsula proclaiming a new faith of Islam. The new masters might justly have observed of the result it will be good *in sha’allah*, God willing.

FURTHER READING

Studies on food and cooking have increased in number over the past 30 years but only a representative selection can be mentioned here. First is the detailed but very accessible study by M.M. Ahsan (1979), [Chapters 3](#) and [5](#). A medieval Arabic medical text has been translated with an excellent introduction by Michael W. Dols (1984). On the subject of agriculture there is the translation and study by D.M. Varisco (1994). The volume *La Alimentacion en las Culturas Islamicas*, edited by M. Marin and D. Waines (1994), contains conference essays in English, Spanish, and French. Another conference produced the volume in English edited by Sami Zubaida & Richard Tapper (1996). An innovative approach to food in Arabic literature is that by J.G. van Gelder (2000). Book XI of al-Ghazali’s classic work *The Revival of Religious Sciences* has been translated by D. Johnson-Davies (2000). *Medieval Arab Cookery* contains essays on a variety of food subjects and translations of two medieval cookbooks by M. Rodinson, A.J. Arberry, & Charles Perry (2001). The final section of David Waines’ (ed) *Patterns of Everyday Life* (2002) presents seven essays on medieval food and drink published between 1974 and 1994. Bottéro’s *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia* (2004) throws new light on the pre-Sassanian practices. For readers of Spanish there is the translation by A. Huici-Miranda (2005) of a thirteenth-century Arabic cookbook, *La Cocina Hispano-Magrebi durante la Epoca Almohade*. Al-Warraq’s cookbook has been translated with excellent introduction, glossary, and indices by Nawal Nasrallah (2007).

Finally, there is the work of David Waines (ed.) (2011) comprising edited articles from the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* relating to food and medicine with a lengthy introduction by the editor.

CHAPTER 38

The Ideological Foundations of the Food Culture of Pre-Imperial China¹

Françoise Sabban

Along with artifacts from archaeological excavations undertaken in the last 50 years, which have provided a great deal of information on the food culture of the first human groups that lived in the area that is now the People's Republic of China, the earliest Chinese texts, the oldest written between the eighth century BC and third century AD, are also a valuable source for the history of food, even if they refer more often to an idealized reality than to attested historical realities. These writings, dealing with history, poetry, philosophy, and medicine, effectively identify the basic elements of a true food culture specific to the Spring–Autumn (722–481 BC) and Warring States (481–222 BC) periods. They continued to structure Chinese representations for many centuries. The relevant features of this paradigm are the civilizing role of cooking and of the consumption of grains, the need for the sovereign to ensure his people's subsistence, respect for ritual in the performance of activities related to alimentation, a strict social and food-centered hierarchy, control of the appetites as a discipline for the body and soul, and recognition of flavors as a gastronomic principle.

The Ideological Foundations of the Food Culture of Pre-Imperial China

Civilizing acts par excellence: cooking food and eating grain

In the mythological account of the origins of Chinese civilization, the obtaining of foodstuffs and their transformation into foods suitable for human beings played a determinant role. The canonical version of the development of human civilization in the earliest written accounts tells of the beneficial intervention of great cultural heroes who put their knowledge of nature and their technical skill, especially with regard to food, at the service of humanity. Suiren the wise, the “Fire-Driller,” taught men to produce fire with his “drill,” which he used to turn a spike in a piece of wood to make a miraculous spark. Shennong, the “Divine Farmer,” brought agriculture and knowledge of the virtues of herbs to mankind, and he initiated men in the cultivation of grain, the only true subsistence food for the human organism. Finally, the Yellow Emperor Huangdi² taught mankind the secret of pots, by inventing pottery

and the stove. Before the actions of these wise men, the poor bipeds had to feed by tearing up their prey and swallowing it raw, mixing flesh, hair, feathers, and blood in a single bite; *rumao yinxue*, as the saying goes (literally “eating the hair, drinking the blood”). This insane diet “corroded their guts” and, we are told, often proved fatal, proof that, while their physiology was indeed that of human beings, their practices were still akin to those of animals.

For the authors of the Classics, farming and cooking undoubtedly mark the advent of the Chinese as civilized beings, distinct from beasts and barbarians. Thus they are continually defined as eaters of grain and cooked food, in contrast to the barbarians of the four horizons, who are unfamiliar with the use of grain and do not know how to cook their food.

The first duty of the sovereign: feeding his people

In ancient China everything related to human food was an affair of state and politicized. It is thus unsurprising that great men, even emperors (whether historical or mythological), were concerned with human survival, and in fact, very concretely, with the contents of their bowls. In the *Hongfan* chapter (The Great Plan) of the *Shujing* (Classic Records), which is thought to be connected to the reign of King Wu of Western Zhou (1045–1043 BC), it is said that the food supply (*shi*) of the people is at the forefront of the “eight objects of government.” Meeting the food needs of his people must be the primary concern of the sovereign. This requirement, constantly put forward by thinkers and historians to judge the action of a statesman, is expressed by a famous formula, attributed to the philosopher and politician Guan Zhong (?–645 BC), which survived down the ages: “For the king, the most valuable asset is his people; for the people, the most valuable asset is food.”³ In other words, caring for his people, the monarch necessarily takes into account their nourishment. To know how to govern is to know how to feed the population. We then note the second part of the formula, “for the people, the most valuable asset is food” (*min yi shi wei tian*), a maxim that was continuously taken up and quoted to mean that “to eat” is the first need of the people, and of human beings in general.

A ritualistic vision of alimentary practice

If the final seasoning of the soup was something so important that the task was sometimes entrusted by the king to his prime minister, as a means of metaphorically testing his ability to govern, this ceremony also serves as an indication of the ritualization of food culture as a whole. From the ruler to the humblest of his subjects, this determined the manner of selecting and consuming food appropriately in a given situation. The various ritual treaties, which describe the regulation of behavior in the ancient society of the Zhou

(eleventh to third centuries BC), although written much later between the second centuries BC and AD, show us a totally codified and ritualized food culture. Compliance with food rituals and observance of the hierarchies they implied, moreover, required a large staff, especially at court. The ritual of the *Zhou Zhouli* (Rites of Zhou), which is supposed to describe the administrative structure of the royal state of Zhou, but probably dates from the Western Han period (202 BC–23 AD), enumerates with a wealth of detail the 20 trades in which the 2292 persons responsible for the court food service were enrolled. Whether this model of “culinary bureaucracy” ever had any reality at the time of Zhou may be doubted, but it nevertheless inspired the organization of the imperial kitchens of successive dynasties until the beginning of the twentieth century.

This extreme ritualization was implicated in all aspects of food culture, but banquets and drinking parties, especially those held at court, were the scene of its expression almost as paroxysm. On these very special occasions, however, food consumption was only one in a series of actions related to each other by a strict protocol. Thus, even before the presentation of dishes, the host invited his guests to a sacrifice, and often the banquet or drinking-session were only a prelude to a contest of archery, the noble sport of choice. The archery, like the banquet, took place to the sound of orchestral music, often with carillons of bronze chimes, the quality of which was based on the social status of the master. The presence of music and of rich dishes made the banquet an opportunity for merry revelry, and etiquette demanded that one refrain from emitting the slightest sigh, which might have suggested dissatisfaction with the menu of the host.

Meat: social marker and mark of seniority

The status of guests at a meal not only determined the nature and inventory of food to which each was entitled according to his rank, but also their quantity, timing, order, and method of consumption. The scenography of meals, constructed through the strict arrangement of dishes and different sequences of food intake, contributed to the display of hierarchical order, be it a matter of family, society, or simply generational rank. However, this applied especially in environments where affluence allowed the implementation of these distinctions. Among the so-called “leaf eaters,” that is to say the common people, essentially peasants and eaters of vegetables, respect for ritual was presumably less strict. The term “leaf eaters” was not merely rhetorical, because the meat was considered a food reserved for dignitaries, princes, the king, and his family, who were justly called “meat eaters.” Meat was iconic of the delicacies that the common people could not eat “without reason.” This clear distinction between the top and bottom of the social hierarchy is illustrated by the story of a border-warden invited to the table of a prince, who, during the meal, set aside the best cuts of meat. When asked why

he sorted his food in this way, he replied “The mother of your humble servant has never tasted such lordly dishes. Permit me to bring her these choice morsels.” The guard, in acting this way, was not only showing great filial piety, a cardinal virtue in China; he was showing it to his prince in particular, and reminding him of the recommendation of Mencius, that the sovereign who wishes to keep his kingdom should dress in silk and feed on meat such subjects whose advanced age justifies such special attention. The philosopher precisely echoes ritual treatises that specify that the meat diet was conceived as a kind of reward due to men of a certain rank, and to the elderly from 70 years onward, whose age commanded respect.

However, despite the incommensurability of eating practices that this social differentiation suggests, a single model of the menu applied to all classes of the population, as reported by one of the ritual treatises: “From princes to the common people, everyone without distinction eats soup (*geng*) and cooked grain (*shi*).” The dietary differences – which were perpetuated even in the context of this idealized common subsistence – were marked by the quality, fine or coarse, of grain, and the composition of soup: meat for those at the top of the social hierarchy and “leaves” for the rest.

Controlling the appetites: discipline for body and soul

If men of the people could not eat delicacies “without reason,” the dignitaries and notables, for their part, were not allowed to gorge on rich foods without limit or drink intoxicating beverages to excess. That they were permitted to eat a particular meat was a function of their rank, and moderation remained the rule. They were to follow in this the advice of Confucius (551–479 BC), whose requirements for diet, collected by his disciples, survived across the centuries. The philosopher never ate beyond measure under any circumstances. The sole exception was wine, whose consumption was not limited provided the drinker kept his wits about him; but of course Confucius drank without excess. And if he preferred fine grains and well-prepared meats, the good ritualist rejected what was not in season, food whose color had faded, and improperly cut meats. However, he always refrained from eating more meat than grain, even when abundance would have allowed this. With the latter requirement Confucius indicated that grain alone should assure subsistence, and that meat could only be a gourmet accompaniment, not to be abused. Proof of this was the change of regimen imposed in cases of bereavement: a simple gruel as sole nourishment and water to drink, these two ingredients sufficing to sustain life.

The doctors, like the philosopher, accorded the essential role of feeding the human being and maintaining his vital principle to grain, and regarded other foods eaten with it as adjuncts. In the *Huangdi Neijing* (the *Yellow Emperor's*

Inner Canon, second century BC), one of the first theoretical medical texts, this view is expressed unambiguously, and its formulation would be taken up in many medical treatises throughout Chinese history: “The five grains feed, the five fruits assist, the five animals (cattle, sheep, pigs, dogs, chickens) supplement, and the five vegetables complete.” Good food hygiene therefore commanded the foundation of a normal diet on the regular eating of grains, embellished with “extras” such as vegetables and meat, the latter, however, to be eaten in moderation. Any deviation from this rule of moderation inevitably led to the ruin of good health. And for the philosopher, the moral implications were no less serious, especially for those who had charge of government. The sustainability of the heavenly mandate of the Son of Heaven was linked to his virtue, and it was indeed crucial to avoid any imbalance in his private life. To the degree to which he was focused on his appetites, he risked ending up like these unworthy rulers, famous tyrants whose conduct is stigmatized in the official history for their licentious lives, but also for the “forests of meat” and “lakes of wine” (*roulin jiuchi*) that they were supposed to have possessed. The “forests” probably allude to the method of storage of meats, which can be seen hanging in tight rows in some scenes from Han tombs. As for “lakes,” they evoke the tanks where alcoholic beverages were safely stored.

Gastronomy and the theory of flavors

If we do not possess, strictly speaking, recipes from before the sixth century AD, several accounts report dishes, considered delicious, and whose consumption was clearly not intended solely to nourish. Hence the *ba zhen* (eight delicacies), royal treats mentioned in the ritual treatises: thin slices of grilled beef, sheep, elk, red or fallow deer, beef *carpaccio* marinated in grain wine, beef tenderloin dried with cinnamon and ginger, and pork liver sausages. Other delicious menus, calculated to stimulate the appetite, figure in the two poems of *Chuci* (*Songs of Chu*), a poetic collection of the third century BC to the fourth AD, which were probably sung in a case of serious illness to retain the patient's soul on earth by arousing its appetite. Fat veal shank, tender and soft, turtle in red sauce, roast lamb in cane-sugar syrup, swans in sour sauce, stewed wild duck, chicken broth, sea-turtle stew, game *consommés*, fine rillettes of pork, of ham, of dog, and so on ... who could doubt the skills of Chinese cooks on the eve of pre-imperial China after reading such a list, especially as their science was based on a fully developed theory of flavors and cuisine found in a developed philosophical compendium of the third century BC? This theory, put into the mouth of the celebrated chef Yi Yin, who became minister of King Tang of Shang, is an allegory of good government. For in order to know how to govern, the good ruler must be guided by the skilled food specialist, who, by controlling fire and water, selecting the finest ingredients and combining the flavors, makes foods that

are “smooth without being sickly, sour without being acrid, salted without excess, strong without overwhelming the palate, having a subtle taste without being bland, and mellow without being greasy.”

Food and Cuisine in Western Han Dynasty China

The unification of China, initially under the rule of Qin Shi Huangdi, first emperor of Qin (221–206 BC) and completed under the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), led to expansions in agriculture, commerce, crafts, and communications, which of course had a strong influence on the food culture of China. Details of the food techniques and practices of the four centuries of the Western (Early) and Eastern (Late) Han periods are supplied both by archaeological evidence and by the information that we can now draw from technical texts such as dictionaries and treatises on agriculture.

Growth and diversification of the food supply

The march towards intensive agriculture began in Northern China in the Warring States period (403–222 BC) and accelerated under the Han, chiefly through the spread of iron agricultural tools, development of a hydraulic network for irrigation, expansion of arable land, adoption of milling techniques, and improvements in farming practices. These technical advances, as well as territorial expansion through the Han conquests to the south and west, had a significant impact on food supplies. Thus, in addition to the various species of millet cultivated in the North since antiquity, foxtail millet (*Setaria italica*) and broomcorn or common millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), which constituted the staple diet, other grains gradually entered the Chinese diet: wheat, barley, rice, soy beans and legumes, and oil seeds (hemp, sesame) were now ordinary, rather than occasional, crops. The conquest of southern China between the second and first centuries BC enriched the inventory of vegetables grown: many vegetables were cultivated, including taro, mallow, hibiscus, turnip, soy bean leaves, mustard greens, gourds and several species of cucurbits, aromatic plants such as several varieties of *Allium*, and ginger. Fruit trees such as jujube, plum, quince, and persimmon were also planted in quantity, but southern products such as litchi, longan, citrus, sugar cane, and betel were also appreciated. To these plants we must add those which, according to legend, were brought back by General Zhang Qian (?–114 BC) from his expeditions in Central Asia as far as present-day Afghanistan in the early second century BC, although it is uncertain that their history in China does indeed extend so far back: cucumber, spinach, beans, grapes, carrot, saffron, coriander, walnuts, garlic, pomegranate, and figs.

Livestock was also of great importance under the Han, if one considers the funeral clay models found in many tombs and representing farmyards, barns, ponds, and animals. Freshwater fish were reared, and for meat there were

poultry, sheep, pigs, dogs, cattle, and probably dairy cows. Wild game was not lacking either, as evidenced by several excavated sites, rich in animal remains.

To these fresh resources were also added a large number of processed goods that had already enjoyed great popularity and whose importance would grow further in the Chinese culture of food and cooking. Surpluses on large agricultural estates were turned into roasted flour or grain, condiment sauces, pickles, preserved fruit, vegetables, meat and fish, in the form of pemmican, pickled vegetables, vinegars, grain sugars, and of course grain wines, a must for any sacrificial ceremony and banquet. These processed goods, whose production could generate considerable profits, also gave rise to a culture of genuine craftsmanship, and were distributed in both local and long-distance commercial channels. This was particularly the case with salt and wine, two essential elements of Chinese food culture, which the state regularly tried, with little success, to subject to a monopoly.

The increase in food resources, the vitality of trade in edible materials, as well as the mixing of populations following the Han conquests contributed to the development of a true culinary art that was no longer expressed only at strictly ritualized festivities, as had been the case in earlier periods.

The main features of a food-based civilization

Despite the extreme diversity and richness of aristocratic menus under the Han evidenced by texts and archaeology, the model of subsistence inherited from antiquity continued to structure menus “from the prince to the private individual.” Among princes and aristocrats, as among peasants, an ordinary meal always consisted of cooked grain and *geng*. The *geng*, a kind of soup or stew in a sauce of variable thickness, was made by the common people from legumes and vegetables, while it was based on meat for those whose status and material affluence allowed for the consumption of animal flesh without any restrictions. The number of types of *geng* figuring in a single meal, and the complexity of their composition, however, indicate whether a meal was festive or ordinary. This preparation, in its most sophisticated versions, testifies to the existence of a true *haute cuisine* under the Han.

The menus of the Marquise of Dai

Very rich food remains have been exhumed from the graves of the family of the Marquise of Dai, dating from 168 BC and located in the southern kingdom of Chu (the present-day Mawangdui, near Changsha in Hunan). Not only have stores of grain such as millet, rice, wheat, and barley, legumes, hemp seeds, baskets of spices such as Chinese cinnamon, Szechuan pepper, ginger, and galangal, been found in sacks, but also prepared dishes, whose names are

known by the labels borne on sheets of wood, which are an inventory of the furniture of the tomb. The most numerous are the 29 different *geng*, the contents of which we can guess from their labels: meat, vegetables, or a mixture of both, sometimes with the addition of rice. Beef, sheep, dog, pig, pheasant, duck, chicken, red deer, and some fish were dressed in the kitchens of the Marquise. Among vegetables, one recognizes, for example, celery and bamboo shoots. The meat, cut into thin slices, was eaten raw, roasted, or fried. Poultry were most often braised. Moreover, pheasant, pigeon, and many other types of meat were transformed into *charcuterie* matured for shorter or longer periods, and sometimes flavored with ginger and Szechuan pepper. To this wealth of meat, where beef predominated, we may add eggs, a whole series of cereal preparations, types of fritter, cakes, and rice with eggs, as well as sweets sweetened with maltose, and dried fruits such as pears and jujubes. Vinegar, condiments, and sauces were also prized: made from meat, fish, and pickled vegetables including gourd, bamboo shoots, and ginger, these indispensable flavor enhancers provided a wide range of tastes.

A true culinary science

We see that the menu of Dai did not lack refinement, and it demonstrates above all a mastery of culinary science. Thanks to the names of the dishes written on the wooden sheets, which reveal the existence of “verbs of cooking,” we can see that the noble kitchen of the Western Han period onward was defined by specific procedures, which referred to dishes that can be identified based on their different methods of cooking and seasoning formulas. The author of the *Yantielun (Discourses on Salt and Iron)*, a text dated to the first century BC, compares the refinements, extravagant in his eyes, of the culinary arts of his time to the virtuous simplicity of the ancients. He explains that butchers’ shops, caterers’ establishments, and taverns now abound everywhere in the city, that gourmet madness has penetrated every social circle, and that no one is satisfied any longer with a diet based on their rank. He adds that people get drunk shamelessly, eat meat without restraint, and not only on the occasion of great sacrifices; that they enjoy lamb and roasted piglets, omelets with onions, minced dog meat, horsewhip sauce, fried fish, chopped liver, marinated mutton, dried chicken, *kumys*, lamb stew, chopped chicks, wild goose soup, abalone *au naturel*, sugared gourds, and so on. As for the commoners, they put on their daily menus turtle stew, carp *sashimi*, testicles of deer, quail with orange, and puffer fish with seasoning and vinegar. Despite his condemnation of these food habits as too ostentatious and expensive, the author of the *Yantielun* seems to delight in this delectable enumeration, which well indicates, in any case, that the preparation of these specialties required a certain expertise and skilled professionals.

A kitchen scene engraved on stone (1 m 52 × 0.76 m), found in a tomb at Shandong Liangtai (Zhucheng district) and dating from the Eastern Han, is particularly instructive as to the richness and complexity of culinary activities

under the Han. In addition to the preparation of food, here mainly meat and fish, the slaughter of animals (sheep, veal, and boar) and the manufacture of alcoholic beverages are depicted, the latter represented at the very bottom of the scene by a filtering operation, kneading of the yeast, and resting of the must. Food storage is well symbolized by pieces of fresh and dried meat hanging from butchers' hooks, while large jars wrapped in protective straw evoke the preservation of grainwines, wines, and condiments. Interestingly, this activity seems to pertain to a professional kitchen with its crew, in which each worker has a specific function and integrates his work in a series of activities which can be characterized as assembly-line fashion, such as for example the slicing of meat, its placement on skewers, and finally its roasting over a special brazier.

Special culinary tools

Another essential factor for any kitchen, access to water, is represented in the Liangtai scene by a well, of a form typical of Northern China, from which a person is represented drawing water with a rope attached to a pulley. The hearth is also an important element of this kitchen. In China, as can be seen represented in the Liangtai scene, the stove was an item of cooking equipment specialized at a very early period. Many tomb-models of furnaces of this type, of clay or even bronze, have been found in tombs dating from the Eastern Han. This type of stove, of clay or brick, built to a design that has persisted until today in the Chinese countryside, has a cooking chamber that is accessed through the front, while the chimney at the rear allows the smoke to escape. On its flat surface, one, two, or three openings were made, allowing the pots to be pushed directly into the stove. One could then adapt them as "steamers" for cooking grains with steam, as is evident from the kitchen of Liangtai, where we see a woman stirring a mixture in a container on what could be a pot set into the stove. The firebox is fed wood by another woman kneeling on the hearth.

Regional cuisines

If the food produced in the kitchen of the Dai family is the result of a genuine professional workforce, it also reflects a cuisine that can be described as "regional." After the delights mentioned a few centuries earlier in the two poems of *Chuci*, supposed to give a taste of life to a seriously ill patient, the menus of the Marquise of Dai constitute the second account, this time very practical, of a Southern kitchen. The features of a dual culinary culture that constantly opposes the North to the South are well established from the Han period, and whose line of demarcation cuts China in half along the level of the Huai River. Turtle, cane syrup to tempt the soul that seeks to escape, rice, lotus root, and bamboo shoots for Dai are all typical products of south China, and foreign to the Yellow River Basin, where one favored the millets, and began to develop an *arte bianca* based on wheat flour, unknown elsewhere at

the time.

Bing, or the art of pasta

Wheat growing being widely distributed in Northern China, and good milling techniques perfected by the introduction of the rotary mill around the fifth century BC, it is indeed from the Western Han that the remarkable qualities of wheat flour for making an elastic, edible dough began to be exploited. From the second century BC, the generic term *bing* refers to a series of preparations of wheat flour, pasta, steamed breads, and cakes. At first reserved for the aristocracy, these dishes rapidly came into fashion and enjoyed a considerable success, to become, after some centuries, emblematic of the Chinese diet by displacing the daily millet of the North.

Grain wine, an essential beverage

However, if there was a commodity that was unanimously prized from North to South, it was grain wine, whose use was widespread and essential for any celebration or ceremony, including sacrificial libations. Han power tried periodically to control its production and sale, but in vain; the monopoly had to be lifted each time shortly after it was established. Food remains from Mawangdui contain yeast for the production of alcoholic beverages, and on the tomb inventory sheets no fewer than eight different names of wines, both light and strong, are mentioned. It is probably a drinking-bout that is depicted in the reliefs in the northern compartment of the tomb of the Marquise of Dai, where she is identified by her garment, seated before several meat dishes, with a pair of chopsticks, skewers, and a cup of wine. If we do not know exactly what the status of drinking-bouts was – were they one of the first acts of a celebration banquet or independent of it? – it is certain that at such meetings and celebrations the guests consumed a considerable amount of alcoholic beverages.

The Han banquet

The presence of a stack of trays in the top left of the kitchen scene of Liangtai reveals the proximity of the banquet hall where the feasts were held, on which the brigade of chefs is depicted at work. It was indeed in the kitchen that the trays were arranged with individual dishes to be served to each guest. They were placed before the guests kneeling on a mat, as is still practiced today in Japan. Depending on the affluence of the house, the plates and dishes were of clay, bamboo, or decorated lacquered wood, as at Mawangdui, where a luxurious dish of red and black lacquer has been excavated.

The banquet in the Han period may in fact be regarded as the symbolic manifestation of commensality. If etiquette, particularly the ordering of seats,

was always of great importance, the severe ritualization which conditioned the feasts of royal and princely pre-imperial China appears to have given way to the festive spirit. Under the Han, the pleasures of the palate, music, and dancing were associated, whether the meeting had a political, calendrical, or commemorative object. These events were of such importance in Han society that they were often chosen as motifs for the decoration for princely and aristocratic tombs, notably under the Eastern Han. Not only scenes of joyful festivities with large numbers of guests, but, as we have seen, kitchen interiors with the household kitchen staff in full operation, were painted in murals or carved in stone. If the iconographic theme of these banquets is usually centered on the time of consumption of wine, the deployment of orchestras, and the feats of acrobats, dancers, or drummers, the precision of kitchen scenes confirms that the tasting of the dishes was also an important part of these celebrations. Unfortunately, we do not know much about the manner in which they were actually conducted. The banquet probably began with a first service of wine. However, we know almost nothing about the scheduling of the menu, because the banquets that have attracted the attention of historians have done so not for their alimentary, but for their political significance.

In fact, the logic of the arrangement of the trays in the kitchen leads us to assume that the menu in its entirety was arranged there. However, a particular order in the consumption of dishes was probably respected. Thus, in a poem of the second century BC, a fine meal seems to consist, in order, of a *geng* soup of chicken, cooked millet, carp *sashimi* cut as fine as hair, and a few “rare and refined dishes” whose composition is not detailed. Yangzhou pears, crunchy and very sweet, were served as a final course.

Although this brief description cannot do justice to the complexity of food and cooking under the Han, it suggests what characterized the period: wealth and an increasing food supply, recognition of cuisine as an art, and to some extent a deritualization of dietary practices when compared with pre-imperial China, which was strongly criticized by the reformists in the first century BC. They wanted, for their part, a return to a form of anti-mercantilist economy, which they imagined as characteristic of the time of Zhou.

FURTHER READING

A bibliographical review of the history of Chinese food between 1911 and 2011 has been produced recently by Sabban (2012); see also Wilkinson (2001) on the subject. In English, a recent overview of food studies in East Asia has been published by Cwiertka & Chen (2012). Chang (1977a) remains an important landmark in the field of food history in China and still can be considered relevant, since it tried to put food back into the history of China. Although not using the ancient sources, Anderson (1988) gives an overview of the evolution of Chinese food and Simoons (1990) adopts a more

encyclopedic approach to Chinese food.

NOTES

- 1 Translated by Nicholas Banner.
- 2 The chronology of the acts of the civilizing heroes is uncertain, varying from text to text. The great deeds that are attributed to them can also vary according to the author.
- 3 The expression *Wangzhe yi min wei tian, er min yi shi wei tian* signifies literally “The king considers his people as the equal of heaven, but the people considers food as the equal of heaven.”

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